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**LITTLE MASTERPIECES OF  
FICTION**





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**F I C T I O N**

Edited by  
**HAMILTON W. MABIE**



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**LITTLE MASTERPIECES OF  
FICTION**



# THE TRIAL FOR MURDER

BY

CHARLES DICKENS

I HAVE always noticed a prevalent want of courage, even among persons of superior intelligence and culture, as to imparting their own psychological experiences when those have been of a strange sort. Almost all men are afraid that what they could relate in such wise would find no parallel or response in a listener's internal life, and might be suspected or laughed at. A truthful traveller, who should have seen some extraordinary creature in the likeness of a sea-serpent, would have no fear of mentioning it; but the same traveller, having had some singular presentiment, impulse, vagary of thought, vision (so-called), dream or other remarkable mental impression, would hesitate considerably before he would own to it. To this reticence I attribute much of the obscurity in which such subjects are involved. We do not habitually communicate our experiences of these subjective things as we do our experiences of objective creation. The consequence is, that the general stock of experience in this regard appears exceptional, and really is so, in respect of being miserably imperfect.



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In what I am going to relate I have no intention of setting up, opposing, or supporting any theory whatever. I know the history of the bookseller of Berlin, I have studied the case of the wife of a late astronomer royal as related by Sir David Brewster, and I have followed the minutest details of a much more remarkable case of spectral illusion occurring within my private circle of friends. It may be necessary to state as to this last, that the sufferer (a lady) was in no degree, however distant, related to me. A mistaken assumption on that head might suggest an explanation of a part of my own case—but only a part—which would be wholly without foundation. It cannot be referred to my inheritance of any developed peculiarity, nor had I ever before any at all similar experience, nor have I ever had any at all similar experience since.

It does not signify how many years ago, or how few, a certain murder was committed in England, which attracted great attention. We hear more than enough of murderers as they rise in succession to their atrocious eminence, and I would bury the memory of this particular brute, if I could, as his body was buried, in Newgate Jail. I purposely abstain from giving any direct clew to the criminal's individuality.

When the murder was first discovered, no suspicion fell—or I ought rather to say, for I cannot be too precise in my facts, it was nowhere publicly hinted that any suspicion fell—on the

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man who was afterward brought to trial. As no reference was at that time made to him in the newspapers, it is obviously impossible that any description of him can at that time have been given in the newspapers. It is essential that this fact be remembered.

Unfolding at breakfast my morning paper, containing the account of that first discovery, I found it to be deeply interesting, and I read it with close attention. I read it twice, if not three times. The discovery had been made in a bedroom, and, when I laid down the paper, I was aware of a flash—rush—flow—I do not know what to call it—no word I can find is satisfactorily descriptive—in which I seemed to see that bedroom passing through my room, like a picture impossibly painted on a running river. Though almost instantaneous in its passing, it was perfectly clear, so clear that I distinctly, and with a sense of relief, observed the absence of the dead body from the bed.

It was in no romantic place that I had this curious sensation, but in chambers in Piccadilly, very near to the corner of St. James's Street. It was entirely new to me. I was in my easy-chair at the moment, and the sensation was accompanied with a peculiar shiver which started the chair from its position. (But it is to be noted that the chair ran easily on castors.) I went to one of the windows (there are two in the room, and the room is on the second floor) to refresh my eyes with the moving

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objects down in Piccadilly. It was a bright autumn morning, and the street was sparkling and cheerful. The wind was high. As I looked out, it brought down from the Park a quantity of fallen leaves, which a gust took, and whirled into a spiral pillar. As the pillar fell and the leaves dispersed I saw two men on the opposite side of the way, going from west to east. They were one behind the other. The foremost man often looked back over his shoulder. The second man followed him, at a distance of some thirty paces, with his right hand menacingly raised. First, the singularity and steadiness of this threatening gesture in so public a thoroughfare attracted my attention; and next, the more remarkable circumstance that nobody heeded it. Both men threaded their way among the other passengers with a smoothness hardly consistent even with the action of walking on a pavement; and no single creature, that I could see, gave them place, touched them, or looked after them. In passing before my windows, they both stared up at me. I saw their two faces very distinctly, and I knew that I could recognize them anywhere. Not that I had consciously noticed anything very remarkable in either face, except that the man who went first had an unusually lowering appearance, and that the face of the man who followed him was of the colour of impure wax.

I am a bachelor, and my valet and his wife constitute my whole establishment. My occupa-

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tion is in a certain branch bank, and I wish that my duties as head of a department were as light as they are popularly supposed to be. They kept me in town that autumn, when I stood in need of change. I was not ill, but I was not well. My reader is to make the most that can be reasonably made of my feeling jaded, having a depressing sense upon me of a monotonous life, and being "slightly dyspeptic." I am assured by my renowned doctor that my real state of health at that time justifies no stronger description, and I quote his own from his written answer to my request for it.

As the circumstances of the murder, gradually unravelling, took stronger and stronger possession of the public mind, I kept them away from mine by knowing as little about them as was possible in the midst of the universal excitement. But I knew that a verdict of wilful murder had been found against the suspected murderer, and that he had been committed to Newgate for trial. I also knew that his trial had been postponed over one sessions of the Central Criminal Court, on the ground of general prejudice and want of time for the preparation of the defence. I may further have known, but I believe I did not, when, or about when, the sessions to which his trial stood postponed would come on.

My sitting-room, bedroom, and dressing-room are all on one floor. With the last there is no communication but through the bedroom. True, there is a door in it, once communicating

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with the staircase, but a part of the fitting of my bath has been—and had then been for some years—fixed across it. At the same period, and as a part of the same arrangement, the door had been nailed up and canvased over.

I was standing in my bedroom late one night giving some directions to my servant before he went to bed. My face was toward the only available door of communication with the dressing-room, and it was closed. My servant's back was toward that door. While I was speaking to him, I saw it open, and a man look in, who very earnestly and mysteriously beckoned to me. That man was the man who had gone second of the two along Piccadilly, and whose face was of the colour of impure wax.

The figure, having beckoned, drew back, and closed the door. With no longer pause than was made by my crossing the bedroom, I opened the dressing-room door, and looked in. I had a lighted candle already in my hand. I felt no inward expectation of seeing the figure in the dressing-room, and I did not see it there.

Conscious that my servant stood amazed, I turned round to him, and said, "Derrick, could you believe that in my cool senses I fancied I saw a——" As I there laid my hand upon his breast, with a sudden start he trembled violently, and said, "Oh, Lord, yes, sir! A dead man beckoning!"

Now I do not believe that this John Derrick,

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my trusty and attached servant for more than twenty years, had any impression whatever of having seen any such figure, until I touched him. The change in him was so startling, when I touched him, that I fully believe he derived his impression in some occult manner from me at that instant.

I bade John Derrick bring some brandy, and I gave him a dram, and was glad to take one myself. Of what had preceded that night's phenomenon I told him not a single word. Reflecting on it, I was absolutely certain that I had never seen that face before, except on the one occasion in Piccadilly. Comparing its expression when beckoning at the door with its expression when it had stared up at me as I stood at my window, I came to the conclusion that on the first occasion it had sought to fasten itself upon my memory, and that on the second occasion it had made sure of being immediately remembered.

I was not very comfortable that night, though I felt a certainty, difficult to explain, that the figure would not return. At daylight I fell into a heavy sleep, from which I was awakened by John Derrick's coming to my bedside with a paper in his hand.

This paper, it appeared, had been the subject of an altercation at the door between its bearer and my servant. It was a summons to me to serve upon a jury at the forthcoming sessions of the central criminal court at the Old Bailey.

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I had never before been summoned on such a jury, as John Derrick well knew. He believed—I am not certain at this hour whether with reason or otherwise—that that class of jurors were customarily chosen on a lower qualification than mine, and he had at first refused to accept the summons. The man who served it had taken the matter very coolly. He had said that my attendance or non-attendance was nothing to him; there the summons was, and I should deal with it at my own peril, and not at his.

For a day or two I was undecided whether to respond to this call, or take no notice of it. I was not conscious of the slightest mysterious bias, influence, or attraction, one way or other. Of that I am as strictly sure as of every other statement that I make here. Ultimately I decided, as a break in the monotony of my life, that I would go.

The appointed morning was a raw morning in the month of November. There was a dense brown fog in Piccadilly, and it became positively black and in the last degree oppressive east of Temple Bar. I found the passages and staircases of the Court-House glaringly lighted with gas, and the Court itself similarly illuminated. I *think* that, until I was conducted by officers into the Old Court and saw its crowded state, I did not know that the murderer was to be tried that day. I *think* that, until I was so helped into the Old Court with considerable difficulty, I did not know into which of the two

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courts sitting my summons would take me. But this must not be received as a positive assertion, for I am not completely satisfied in my mind on either point.

I took my seat in the place appropriated to jurors in waiting, and I looked about the court as well as I could through the cloud of fog and breath that was heavy in it. I noticed the black vapour hanging like a murky curtain outside the great windows, and I noticed the stifled sound of wheels on the straw or tan that was littered in the street; also, the hum of the people gathered there, which a shrill whistle, or a louder song or hail than the rest, occasionally pierced. Soon afterward the judges, two in number, entered, and took their seats. The buzz in the court was awfully hushed. The direction was given to put the murderer to the bar. He appeared there. And in that same instant I recognised in him the first of the two men who had gone down Piccadilly.

If my name had been called then I doubt if I could have answered to it audibly; but it was called about sixth or eighth in the panel, and I was by that time able to say, "Here!"

Now, observe. As I stepped into the box, the prisoner, who had been looking on attentively, but with no sign of concern, became violently agitated, and beckoned to his attorney. The prisoner's wish to challenge me was so manifest that it occasioned a pause, during which the attorney, with his hand upon the dock, whispered



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with his client, and shook his head. I afterward had it from that gentleman, that the prisoner's first affrighted words to him were, "*At all hazards, challenge that man!*" But, as he would give no reason for it, and admitted that he had not even known my name until he heard it called and I appeared, it was not done.

Both on the ground already explained, that I wish to avoid reviving the unwholesome memory of that murderer, and also because a detailed account of his long trial is by no means indispensable to my narrative, I shall confine myself closely to such incidents in the ten days and nights during which we, the jury, were kept together, as directly bear on my own curious personal experience. It is in that, and not in the murderer, that I seek to interest my reader. It is to that, and not to a page of the Newgate Calendar, that I beg attention.

I was chosen foreman of the jury. On the second morning of the trial, after evidence had been taken for two hours (I heard the church clocks strike), happening to cast my eyes over my brother jurymen, I found an inexplicable difficulty in counting them. I counted them several times, yet always with the same difficulty. In short, I made them one too many.

I touched the brother jurymen whose place was next me, and I whispered to him, "Oblige me by counting us." He looked surprised by the request, but turned his head and counted.

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"Why," says he, suddenly, "we are thirt—  
But no, it's not possible. No. We are twelve."

According to my counting that day, we were always right in detail, but in the gross we were always one too many. There was no appearance—no figure—to account for it, but I had now an inward foreshadowing of the figure that was surely coming.

The jury were housed at the London Tavern. We all slept in one large room on separate tables, and we were constantly in the charge and under the eye of the officer sworn to hold us in safe-keeping. I see no reason for suppressing the real name of that officer. He was intelligent, highly polite, and obliging, and (I was glad to hear) much respected in the city. He had an agreeable presence, good eyes, enviable black whiskers, and a fine sonorous voice. His name was Mr. Harker.

When we turned into our twelve beds at night, Mr. Harker's bed was drawn across the door. On the night of the second day, not being disposed to lie down, and seeing Mr. Harker sitting on his bed, I went and sat beside him, and offered him a pinch of snuff. As Mr. Harker's hand touched mine in taking it from my box, a peculiar shiver crossed him, and he said, "Who is this?"

Following Mr. Harker's eyes, and looking along the room, I saw again the figure I expected—the second of the two men who had gone down Piccadilly. I rose and advanced a

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few steps, then stopped, and looked round at Mr. Harker. He was quite unconcerned, laughed, and said, in a pleasant way, "I thought for a moment we had a thirteenth jurymen, without a bed. But I see it is the moonlight."

Making no revelation to Mr. Harker, but inviting him to take a walk with me to the end of the room, I watched what the figure did. It stood for a few moments by the bedside of each of my eleven brother jurymen, close to the pillow. It always went to the right-hand side of the bed, and always passed out crossing the foot of the next bed. It seemed, from the action of the head, merely to look down pensively at each recumbent figure. It took no notice of me, or of my bed, which was that nearest to Mr. Harker's. It seemed to go out where the moonlight came in, through a high window, as by an aerial flight of stairs.

Next morning at breakfast, it appeared that everybody present had dreamed of the murdered man last night, except myself and Mr. Harker.

I now felt as convinced that the second man who had gone down Piccadilly was the murdered man (so to speak), as if it had been borne into my comprehension by his immediate testimony. But even this took place, and in a manner for which I was not at all prepared.

On the fifth day of the trial, when the case for the prosecution was drawing to a close, a miniature of the murdered man, missing from his bedroom upon the discovery of the deed, and

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afterward found in a hiding-place where the murderer had been seen digging, was put in evidence. Having been identified by the witness under examination, it was handed up to the bench, and thence handed down to be inspected by the jury. As an officer in a black gown was making his way with it across to me, the figure of the second man who had gone down Piccadilly impetuously started from the crowd, caught the miniature from the officer, and gave it to me with his own hands, at the same time saying, in a low and hollow tone—before I saw the miniature, which was in a locket—*“I was younger then, and my face was not then drained of blood.”*

It also came between me and the brother juryman to whom I would have given the miniature, and between him and the brother juryman to whom he would have given it, and so passed it on through the whole of our number, and back into my possession. Not one of them, however, detected this.

At table, and generally when we were shut up together in Mr. Harker's custody, we had from the first naturally discussed the day's proceedings a good deal. On that fifth day, the case for the prosecution being closed, and we having that side of the question in a completed shape before us, our discussion was more animated and serious. Among our number was a vestryman—the densest idiot I have ever seen at large—who met the plainest evidence with

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the most preposterous objections, and who was sided with by two flabby parochial parasites—all the three impanelled from a district so delivered over to fever that they ought to have been upon their own trial for five hundred murders. When these mischievous blockheads were at their loudest, which was toward midnight, while some of us were already preparing for bed, I again saw the murdered man. He stood grimly behind them, beckoning to me. On my going toward them, and striking into the conversation, he immediately retired. This was the beginning of a separate series of appearances, confined to that long room in which *we* were confined. Whenever a knot of my brother jurymen laid their heads together, I saw the head of the murdered man among theirs. Whenever their comparison of notes was going against him, he would solemnly and irresistibly beckon to me.

It will be borne in mind that down to the production of the miniature, on the fifth day of the trial, I had never seen the appearance in court. Three changes occurred now that we entered on the case for the defence. Two of them I will mention together, first. The figure was now in court continually, and it never there addressed itself to me, but always to the person who was speaking at the time. For instance: the throat of the murdered man had been cut straight across. In the opening speech for the defence, it was suggested that

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the deceased might have cut his own throat. At that very moment, the figure, with its throat in the dreadful condition referred to (this it had concealed before), stood at the speaker's elbow, motioning across and across its windpipe, now with the right hand, now with the left, vigorously suggesting to the speaker himself the impossibility of such a wound having been self-inflicted by either hand. For another instance: a witness to character, a woman, deposed to the prisoner's being the most amiable of mankind. The figure at that instant stood on the floor before her, looking her full in the face, and pointing out the prisoner's evil countenance with an extended arm and an outstretched finger.

The third change now to be added impressed me strongly as the most marked and striking of all. I do not theorise upon it; I accurately state it, and there leave it. Although the appearance was not itself perceived by those whom it addressed, its coming close to such persons was invariably attended by some trepidation or disturbance on their part. It seemed to me as if it were prevented, by laws to which I was not amenable, from fully revealing itself to others, and yet as if it could invisibly, dumbly, and darkly overshadow their minds. When the leading counsel for the defence suggested that hypothesis of suicide, and the figure stood at the learned gentleman's elbow, frightfully sawing at its severed throat, it is undeniable that the counsel faltered in his

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speech, lost for a few seconds the thread of his ingenious discourse, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and turned extremely pale. When the witness to character was confronted by the appearance, her eyes most certainly did follow the direction of its pointed finger, and rest in great hesitation and trouble upon the prisoner's face. Two additional illustrations will suffice. On the eighth day of the trial, after the pause which was every day made early in the afternoon for a few minutes' rest and refreshment, I came back into court with the rest of the jury some little time before the return of the judges. Standing up in the box and looking about me, I thought the figure was not there, until, chancing to raise my eyes to the gallery, I saw it bending forward, and leaning over a very decent woman, as if to assure itself whether the judges had resumed their seats or not. Immediately afterward that woman screamed, fainted, and was carried out. So with the venerable, sagacious, and patient judge who conducted the trial. When the case was over, and he settled himself and his papers to sum up, the murdered man, entering by the judges' door, advanced to his Lordship's desk, and looked eagerly over his shoulder at the pages of his notes which he was turning. A change came over his Lordship's face; his hand stopped; the peculiar shiver that I knew so well passed over him; he faltered, 'Excuse me, gentlemen, for a few moments. I am somewhat oppressed

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by the vitiated air." And he did not recover until he had drunk a glass of water.

Through all the monotony of six of those interminable ten days—the same judges and others on the bench, the same murderer in the dock, the same lawyers at the table, the same tones of question and answer rising to the roof of the court, the same scratching of the judge's pen, the same ushers going in and out, the same lights kindled at the same hour when there had been any natural light of day, the same foggy curtain outside the great windows when it was foggy, the same rain pattering and dripping when it was rainy, the same foot-marks of turnkeys and prisoner day after day on the same sawdust, the same keys locking and unlocking the same heavy doors—through all the wearisome monotony which made me feel as if I had been foreman of the jury for a vast period of time, and Piccadilly had flourished coevally with Babylon, the murdered man never lost one trace of his distinctness in my eyes, nor was he at any moment less distinct than anybody else. I must not omit, as a matter of fact, that I never once saw the appearance which I call by the name of the murdered man look at the murderer. Again and again I wondered, "Why does he not?" But he never did.

Nor did he look at me, after the production of the miniature, until the last closing minutes of the trial arrived. We retired to consider, at



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seven minutes before ten at night. The idiotic vestryman and his two parochial parasites gave us so much trouble that we twice returned into court to beg to have certain extracts from the judge's notes re-read. Nine of us had not the smallest doubt about those passages, neither, I believe, had anyone in the court. The dunder-headed triumvirate, however, having no idea but obstruction, disputed them for that very reason. At length we prevailed, and finally the jury returned into court at ten minutes past twelve.

The murdered man at that time stood directly opposite the jury-box, on the other side of the court. As I took my place, his eyes rested on me with great attention. He seemed satisfied, and slowly shook a great gray veil, which he carried on his arm for the first time, over his head and whole form. As I gave in our verdict, "Guilty," the veil collapsed, all was gone, and his place was empty.

The murderer, being asked by the judge, according to usage, whether he had anything to say before sentence of death should be passed upon him, indistinctly muttered something which was described in the leading newspapers of the following day as "a few rambling, incoherent, and half-audible words, in which he was understood to complain that he had not had a fair trial, because the foreman of the jury was prepossessed against him." The remarkable declaration that he really made was

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this: "My Lord, I knew I was a doomed man when the foreman of my jury came into the box. My Lord, I knew he would never let me off, because, before I was taken, he somehow got to my bedside in the night, woke me, and put a rope round my neck."

## THE NECKLACE

BY

HENRI RENÉ ALBERT GUY DE MAUPASSANT

SHE was one of those pretty, charming girls who are sometimes, as if through the irony of fate, born into a family of clerks. She was without dowry or expectations, and had no means of becoming known, appreciated, loved, wedded, by any rich or influential man; so she allowed herself to be married to a small clerk belonging to the Ministry of Public Instruction. She dressed plainly because she could not afford to dress well, and was unhappy because she felt she had dropped from her proper station, which for women is a matter of attractiveness, beauty, and grace, rather than of family descent. Good manners, an intuitive knowledge of what is elegant, nimbleness of wit, are the only requirements necessary to place a woman of the people on an equality with one of the aristocracy.

She fretted constantly, feeling all things delicate and luxurious to be her birthright. She suffered on account of the meagreness of her surroundings, the bareness of the walls, the tarnished furniture, the ugly curtains; deficiencies which would have left any other woman of her class untouched, irritated and tormented

## The Necklace

her. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework engendered hopeless regrets followed by fantastic dreams. She thought of a noiseless, hallowed ante-room, with Oriental carpets, lighted with tall branching candlesticks of bronze and of two big, knee-breeched footmen, drowsy from the stove-heated air, dozing in great arm-chairs. She thought of a long drawing-room hung with ancient brocade, of a beautiful cabinet holding priceless curios, of an alluring, scented boudoir intended for five-o'clock chats with intimates, with men famous and courted, and whose acquaintance is longed for by all women.

When she sat down to dinner, at the round table spread with a cloth three days old, opposite her husband who uncovered the tureen, and exclaimed with ecstasy, "Ah, I like a good stew! I know nothing to beat this!" she thought of dainty dinners, of shining plate, of tapestry which peopled the walls with human shapes, and with strange birds flying among fairy trees. And then she thought of delicious viands served in costly dishes, and of murmured gallantries which you listen to with a comfortable smile while you are eating the rose-tinted flesh of a trout or the wing of a quail.

She had no handsome gowns, no jewels—nothing, though these were her whole life; it was these that meant existence to her. She would so have liked to please, to be thought fascinating, to be envied, to be sought out. She had a friend, a

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former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, but whom she did not like to go to see any more because she would come home jealous, covetous.

But one evening her husband returned home jubilant, holding a large envelope in his hand.

"Here is something for you," he said.

She tore open the cover sharply, and drew out a printed card bearing these words: "The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau request the honour of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted as her husband expected, she threw the invitation on the table with disgust, muttering, "What do you think I can do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go anywhere, and this is such a rare opportunity. I had hard work to get it. Every one is wild to go; it is very select, and invitations to clerks are scarce. The whole official world will be there."

She looked at him with a scornful eye, as she said petulantly, "And what have I to put on my back?" He had not thought of that. He stammered, "Why, the dress you wear to the theatre; it looks all right to me."

He stopped in despair, seeing his wife was crying. Two big tears rolled down from the corners of her eyes to the corners of her mouth.

## The Necklace

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he faltered.

With great effort, she controlled herself, and replied coldly, while she dried her wet cheeks:

"Nothing, except that I have no dress, and, for that reason, cannot go to the ball. Give your invitation to some fellow-clerk whose wife is better provided than I am."

He was dumfounded, but replied:

"Come, Mathilde, let us see now—how much would a suitable dress cost; one you could wear at other times—something quite simple?"

She pondered several moments, calculating, and guessing too, how much she could safely ask for without an instant refusal or bringing down upon her head a volley of objections from her frugal husband.

At length she said hesitatingly, "I can't say exactly, but I think I could do with four hundred francs."

He changed colour because he was laying aside just that sum to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends, who went down there on Sundays to shoot larks. Nevertheless, he said: "Very well, I will give you four hundred francs. Get a pretty dress."

The day of the ball drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed despondent, nervous, upset, though her dress was all ready. One evening her husband observed: "I say, what is the

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matter, Mathilde? You have been very queer lately." And she replied, "It exasperates me not to have a single ornament of any kind to put on. I shall look like a fright—I would almost rather stay at home." He answered: "Why not wear flowers? They are very fashionable at this time of the year. You can get a handful of fine roses for ten francs."

But she was not persuaded. "No, it's so mortifying to look poverty-stricken among women who are rich."

Then her husband exclaimed: "How slow you are! Go and see your friend, Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough to do that."

She gave an exclamation of delight: "True! I never thought of that!"

Next day she went to her friend and poured out her woes. Mme. Forestier went to a closet with a glass door, took out a large jewel-box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel, "Here, take your choice, my dear."

She looked at some bracelets, then at a pearl necklace, and then at a Venetian cross curiously wrought of gold and precious stones. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitated, was loath to take them off and return them. She kept inquiring, "Have you any more?"

"Certainly, look for yourself. I don't know what you want."

Suddenly Mathilde discovered, in a black satin box, a magnificent necklace of diamonds, and

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her heart began to beat with excitement. With trembling hands she took the necklace and fastened it round her neck outside her dress, becoming lost in admiration of herself as she looked in the glass. Tremulous with fear lest she be refused, she asked, "Will you lend me this—only this?"

"Yes, of course I will "

Mathilde fell upon her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, and rushed off with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived

Mme. Loisel was a great success. She was prettier than them all, lovely, gracious, smiling, and wild with delight. All the men looked at her, inquired her name, tried to be introduced; all the officials of the Ministry wanted a waltz—even the minister himself noticed her. She danced with abandon, with ecstasy, intoxicated with joy, forgetting everything in the triumph of her beauty, in the radiance of her success, in a kind of mirage of bliss made up of all this worship, this adulation, of all these stirring impulses, and of that realisation of perfect surrender, so sweet to the soul of woman.

She left about four in the morning.

Since midnight her husband had been sleeping in a little deserted anteroom with three other men whose wives were enjoying themselves. He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, ordinary, everyday garments, con-



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trasting sorrily with her elegant ball dress. She felt this, and wanted to get away so as not to be seen by the other women, who were putting on costly furs.

Loisel detained her: "Wait a little; you will catch cold outside; I will go and call a cab."

But she would not listen to him, and hurried down-stairs. When they reached the street they could not find a carriage, and they began to look for one, shouting to the cabmen who were passing by. They went down toward the river in desperation, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quays one of those antiquated, all-night broughams, which, in Paris, wait till after dark before venturing to display their dilapidation. It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and once more, wearily, they climbed the stairs.

Now all was over for her; as for him, he remembered that he must be at his office at ten o'clock. She threw off her cloak before the glass, that she might behold herself once more in all her magnificence. Suddenly she uttered a cry of dismay—the necklace was gone!

Her husband, already half-undressed, called out, "Anything wrong?"

She turned wildly toward him: "I have—I have—I've lost Mme. Forestier's necklace!"

He stood aghast: "Where? When? You haven't!"

They looked in the folds of her dress, in the

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By the end of the week they had given up all hope. Loisel, who looked five years older, said, "We must plan how we can replace the necklace."

The next day they took the black satin box to the jeweller whose name was found inside. He referred to his books.

"You did not buy that necklace of me, Madame. I can only have supplied the case."

They went from jeweller to jeweller, hunting for a necklace like the lost one, trying to remember its appearance, heartsick with shame and misery. Finally, in a shop at the Palais Royal, they found a string of diamonds which looked to them just like the other. The price was forty thousand francs, but they could have it for thirty-six thousand. They begged the jeweller to keep it three days for them, and made an agreement with him that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs if they found the lost necklace before the last of February.

Loisel had inherited eighteen thousand francs from his father. He could borrow the remainder. And he did borrow right and left, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, assumed heavy obligations, trafficked with money-lenders at usurious rates, and, putting the rest of his life in pawn, pledged his signature over and over again. Not knowing how he was to make it all good, and terrified by the penalty

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yet to come, by the dark destruction which hung over him, by the certainty of incalculable deprivations of body and tortures of soul, he went to get the new bauble, throwing down upon the jeweller's counter the thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel returned the necklace, Mme. Forestier said to her coldly: "Why did you not bring it back sooner? I might have wanted it."

She did not open the case—to the great relief of her friend.

Supposing she had! Would she have discovered the substitution, and what would she have said? Would she not have accused Mme. Loisel of theft?

Mme. Loisel now knew what it was to be in want, but she showed sudden and remarkable courage. That awful debt must be paid, and she would pay it.

They sent away their servant, and moved up into a garret under the roof. She began to find out what heavy housework and the fatiguing drudgery of the kitchen meant. She washed the dishes, scraping the greasy pots and pans with her rosy nails. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and dish-towels, which dried upon the line. She lugged slops and refuse down to the street every morning, bringing back fresh water, stopping on every landing, panting for breath. With her basket on her arm, and dressed like a woman of the people, she haggled with the

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fruiterer, the grocer, and the butcher, often insulted, but getting every sou's worth that belonged to her.

Each month notes had to be met, others renewed, extensions of time procured. Her husband worked in the evenings, straightening out tradesmen's accounts; he sat up late at night, copying manuscripts at five sous a page.

And this they did for ten years.

At the end of that time they had paid up everything, everything—with all the principal and the accumulated compound interest.

Mme. Loisel looked old now. She had become a domestic drudge, sinewy, rough-skinned, coarse. With tousled hair, tucked-up skirts, and red hands, she would talk loudly while mopping the floor with great splashes of water. But sometimes, when alone, she sat near the window, and she thought of that gay evening long ago, of the ball where she had been so beautiful, so much admired. Supposing she had not lost the necklace — what then? Who knows? Who knows? Life is so strange and shifting. How easy it is to be ruined or saved!

But one Sunday, going for a walk in the Champs Élysées to refresh herself after her hard week's work, she accidentally came upon a familiar-looking woman with a child. It was Mme. Forestier, still young, still lovely, still charming.

Mme. Loisel became agitated. Should she

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“speak to her? Of course. Now that she had paid, she would tell her all about it. Why not? She went up to her.

“How do you do, Jeanne?”

The other, astonished at the easy manner toward her assumed by a plain housewife whom she did not recognise, said:

“But, Madame, you have made a mistake; I do not know you.”

“Why, I am Mathilde Loisel!”

Her friend gave a start.

“Oh, my poor Mathilde,” she cried, “how you have changed!”

“Yes; I have seen hard days since last I saw you; hard enough—and all because of you.”

“Of me? And why?”

“You remember the diamond necklace you loaned me to wear at the Ministry ball?”

“Yes, I do. What of it?”

“Well, I lost it!”

“But you brought it back—explain yourself.”

“I bought one just like it, and it took us ten years to pay for it. It was not easy for us who had nothing, but it is all over now, and I am glad.”

Mme. Forestier stared.

“And you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?”

“Yes; and you never knew the difference, they were so alike.” And she smiled with joyful pride at the success of it all.

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Mme. Forestier, deeply moved, took both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! My necklace was paste. It was worth only about five hundred francs!"

# PETER SCHLEMIHL

BY

ADELBERT VON CHAMISSE

## I

AFTER a prosperous, but to me very wearisome, voyage we at last came into port. Immediately on landing, I got together my few effects, and, squeezing through the crowd, went into the nearest and humblest inn which first met my gaze. When I requested a room, the waiter scanned me from head to foot, and conducted me to one. I asked for some cold water, and for the correct address of Mr. Thomas John, which was described as being "by the north gate, the first country-house to the right, a large new house of red and white marble, with many pillars." This was enough. As the day was not yet far advanced, I untied my bundle, took out my newly turned black coat, dressed myself in my best clothes, and, with my letter of recommendation, set out for the man who was to assist me in the attainment of my moderate wishes.

After proceeding up the north street, I reached the gate, and saw the marble columns glittering through the trees. Having wiped the dust from my shoes with my pocket-handkerchief, and re-

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adjusted my cravat, I rang the bell—offering up at the same time a silent prayer. The door flew open, and the porter sent in my name. I soon had the honour to be invited into the park, where Mr. John was walking with a few friends. I recognised him at once by his corpulency and self-complacent air. He received me very well—just as a rich man receives a poor devil; and turning to me, took my letter. “Oh, from my brother! it is a long time since I heard from him: is he well? Yonder,” he went on—turning to the company, and pointing to a distant hill—“yonder is the site of the new building.” He broke the seal without discontinuing the conversation, which turned upon riches. “The man,” he said, “who does not possess at least a million is a poor wretch.” “Oh, how true!” I exclaimed, in the fulness of my heart. He seemed pleased at this, and replied with a smile, “Stop here, my dear friend; afterward I shall, perhaps, have time to tell you what I think of this,” pointing to the letter, which he then put into his pocket, and, turning round to the company, offering his arm to a young lady: his example was followed by the other gentlemen, each politely escorting a lady; and the whole party proceeded toward a little hill thickly planted with blooming roses.

I followed without troubling any one, for none took the least further notice of me. The party was in high spirits—lounging about and jesting—speaking sometimes of trifling matters very



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seriously, and of serious matters as triflingly—and exercising their wit in particular to great advantage on their absent friends and their affairs. I was too ignorant of what they were talking about to understand much of it, and too anxious and absorbed in my own reflections to occupy myself with the solution of such enigmas as their conversation presented.

By this time we had reached the thicket of roses. The lovely Fanny, who seemed to be the queen of the day, was obstinately bent on plucking a rose-branch for herself, and, in the attempt, pricked her finger with a thorn. The crimson stream, as if flowing from the dark-tinted rose, tinged her fair hand with the purple current. This circumstance set the whole company in commotion; and court-plaster was called for. A quiet, elderly man, tall and meagre-looking, who was one of the company, but whom I had not before observed, immediately put his hand into the tight breast-pocket of his old-fashioned coat of gray sarsenet, pulled out a small letter-case, opened it, and, with a most respectful bow, presented the lady with the wished-for article. She received it without noticing the giver or thanking him. The wound was bound up, and the party proceeded along the hill toward the back part, from which they enjoyed an extensive view across the green labyrinth of the park to the wide-spreading ocean. The view was truly a magnificent one. A slight speck was observed on the horizon, between the dark flood and the

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azure sky. "A telescope!" called out Mr. John; but before any of the servants could answer the summons, the gray man, with a modest bow, drew his hand from his pocket and presented a beautiful Dollond's telescope to Mr. John, who, on looking through it, informed the company that the speck in the distance was the ship which had sailed yesterday, and which was detained within sight of the haven by contrary winds. The telescope passed from hand to hand, but was not returned to the owner, whom I gazed at with astonishment, since I could not conceive how so large an instrument could have proceeded from so small a pocket. This, however, seemed to excite surprise in no one; and the gray man appeared to create as little interest as myself.

Refreshments were now brought forward, consisting of the rarest fruits from all parts of the world, served up in the most costly dishes. Mr. John did the honours with unaffected grace, and addressed me for the second time, saying, "You had better eat; you did not get such things at sea." I acknowledged his politeness with a bow, which, however, he did not perceive, having turned round to speak with some one else.

The party would willingly have stopped some time here on the declivity of the hill, to enjoy the extensive prospect before them, had they not been apprehensive of the dampness of the grass. "How delightful it would be," exclaimed some one, "if we had a Turkey carpet to lay down here!" The wish was scarcely expressed when

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the man in the gray coat put his hand in his pocket, and, with a modest and even humble air, pulled out a rich Turkey carpet, embroidered in gold. The servant received it as a matter of course, and spread it out on the desired spot; and, without any ceremony, the company seated themselves on it. Confounded by what I saw, I gazed again at the man, his pocket, and the carpet, which was more than twenty feet in length and ten in breadth; I rubbed my eyes, not knowing what to think, particularly as no one appeared to see anything extraordinary in the matter.

I should gladly have made some inquiries respecting the man, and asked who he was, but knew not to whom I should address myself, for I felt almost more afraid of the servants than of their master. At length I took courage, and, stepping up to a young man who seemed of less consequence than the others, and who was more frequently standing by himself, I begged of him, in a low tone, to tell me who the obliging gentleman in the gray cloak was. "That man who looks like a piece of thread just escaped from a tailor's needle?" "Yes; he who is standing alone yonder." "I do not know," was the reply; and to avoid, as it seemed, any further conversation with me, he turned away, and spoke of some commonplace matters with a neighbour.

The sun's rays now being stronger, the ladies complained of feeling oppressed by the heat; and the lovely Fanny, turning carelessly to the

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gray man, to whom I had not yet observed that any one had addressed the most trifling question, asked him if, perchance, he had not a tent about him. He replied with a low bow, as if some unmerited honour had been conferred upon him, and, putting his hand in his pocket, drew from it canvas, poles, cord, iron—in short, everything belonging to the most splendid tent for a party of pleasure. The young gentlemen assisted in pitching it, and it covered the whole carpet; but no one seemed to think that there was anything extraordinary about the matter.

I had long felt secretly uneasy—indeed, almost horrified; but how was this feeling increased when, at the next wish expressed, I saw him take from his pocket three horses! Yes, Adelbert, three large beautiful steeds, with saddles and bridles, out of the very pocket whence had already issued a letter-case, a telescope, a carpet twenty feet broad and ten in length, and a pavilion of the same extent, with all its appurtenances! Did I not assure thee that my own eyes had seen all this, thou wouldst certainly disbelieve it.

This man, although he appeared so humble and embarrassed in his air and manners, and passed so unheeded, had inspired me with such a feeling of horror by the unearthly paleness of his countenance, from which I could not avert my eyes, that I was unable longer to endure it.

I determined, therefore, to steal away from the company, which appeared no difficult mat-

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ter, from the undistinguished part I acted in it<sup>a</sup> I resolved to return to the town, and pay another visit to Mr. John the following morning, and, at the same time, make some inquiries of him relative to the extraordinary man in gray, provided I could command sufficient courage. Would to Heaven that such good-fortune had awaited me!

I had stolen safely down the hill, through the thicket of roses, and now found myself on an open plain; but, fearing lest I should be met out of the proper path, crossing the grass, I cast an inquisitive glance around, and started as I beheld the man in the gray cloak advancing toward me. He took off his hat, and made me a lower bow than mortal had ever yet favoured me with. It was evident that he wished to address me, and I could not avoid encountering him without seeming rude. I returned his salutation, therefore, and stood bareheaded in the sunshine as if rooted to the ground. I gazed at him with the utmost horror, and felt like a bird fascinated by a serpent.

He affected an air of embarrassment. With his eyes on the ground, he bowed several times, drew nearer, and at last, without looking up, addressed me in a low and hesitating voice, almost in the tone of a suppliant: "Will you, sir, excuse my importunity in venturing to intrude upon you in so unusual a manner? I have a request to make—would you most graciously be pleased to allow me——?" "Hold! for Heaven's

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sake!" I exclaimed. "What can I do for a man who——" I stopped in some confusion, which he seemed to share. After a moment's pause, he resumed: "During the short time I have had the pleasure to be in your company, I have—permit me, sir, to say—been looking with intense admiration at your most beautiful shadow, and have remarked the air of noble indifference with which you, at the same time, turn from the glorious picture at your feet, as if disdaining to vouchsafe it a glance. Excuse the boldness of my proposal; but perhaps you would have no objection to selling me your shadow?" He stopped, while my head turned round like a mill-wheel. What was I to think of so extraordinary a proposal? Sell my shadow! "He must be mad," thought I, and assuming a tone more in accordance with the submissiveness of his own, I replied: "My good friend, are you not content with your own shadow? This would be a bargain of a strange nature indeed!"

"I have in my pocket," he said, "many things which may possess some value in *your* eyes: for that inestimable shadow, *I* should deem the highest price too little."

A cold shudder came over me as I recollected the pocket; and I could not conceive what had induced me to style him "*good friend*," which I took care not to repeat, endeavouring to make up for it by a studied politeness.

I now resumed the conversation: "But, sir—excuse your humble servant—I am at a loss to

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comprehend your meaning—my shadow?—how can I——?”

“Permit me,” he exclaimed, interrupting me, “to gather up the noble image as it lies on the ground, and to take it into my possession. As to the manner of accomplishment, leave that to me. In return, and as an evidence of my gratitude, I will let you take your choice of all the treasures I have in my pocket, among which are a variety of charming articles, not exactly adapted for you, who, I am sure, would prefer the wishing-cap of Fortunatus, all made new and sound again, and a lucky purse which also belonged to him.”

“Fortunatus’s purse!” cried I; for, great as was my mental anguish, with that one word he had penetrated the deepest recesses of my soul. A feeling of giddiness came over me, and double ducats glittered before my eyes.

“Be pleased, gracious sir, to examine this purse, and make a trial of its contents.” He put his hand in his pocket, and drew forth a large, strongly stitched bag of stout Cordovan leather, with a couple of strings to match, and presented it to me. I seized it—took out ten gold pieces, then ten more, and this I repeated again and again. Instantly, I held out my hand to him. “Done,” said I; “the bargain is made: my shadow for the purse.” “Agreed,” he answered; and, immediately kneeling down, I beheld him, with extraordinary dexterity, gently loosen my shadow from the grass, lift it up, fold it together,

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and, finally, put it in his pocket. He then rose, bowed once more to me, and directed his steps toward the rose-bushes. I fancied I heard him quietly laughing to himself. However, I held the purse fast by the two strings. The earth was basking beneath the brightness of the sun—but about that time I lost consciousness.

On recovering my senses, I hastened to quit a place where I hoped there was nothing further to detain me. I first filled my pockets with gold, then fastened the strings of the purse round my neck, and concealed it in my bosom. I passed unnoticed out of the park, gained the high road, and took the way to the town. As I was thoughtfully approaching the gate, I heard some one behind me exclaiming, "Young man! young man! you have lost your shadow!" I turned and perceived an old woman calling after me. "Thank you, my good woman," said I, and throwing her a piece of gold for her well-intended information, I stepped under the trees. At the gate, again, it was my fate to hear the sentry inquiring where the gentleman had left his shadow, and immediately after I heard a couple of women exclaiming, "Jesus Maria, the poor man has no shadow!" All this began to depress me, and I carefully avoided walking in the sun. But this was not possible everywhere, and in the next broad street I had to cross, unfortunately at the very hour when the boys were coming out of school, a humpbacked lout of a fellow—I see him yet—soon made the discovery that I was



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without a shadow, and communicated the news, with loud shouts, to a knot of young urchins. The whole swarm immediately surrounded me and pelted me with mud. "People," cried they, "generally take their shadows with them when they walk in the sun!"

In order to drive them away, I threw gold by handfuls among them, and sprang into a hackney-coach which some compassionate spectators sent to my rescue.

As soon as I found myself alone in the rolling vehicle, I began to weep bitterly. I had by this time a misgiving that, in the same degree in which gold in this world prevails over merit and virtue, by so much one's shadow excels gold. Now that I had sacrificed my conscience for riches, and given my shadow in exchange for mere gold, what on earth would become of me?

As the coach stopped at the door of my inn, I felt much perplexed and not at all disposed to enter so wretched an abode. I called for my things, and received them with an air of contempt, threw down a few gold pieces, and requested to be driven to a first-rate hotel. This house had a northern aspect, so that I had nothing to fear from the sun. I dismissed the coachman with gold; asked to be conducted to the best apartment, and locked myself up in it as soon as possible.

Imagine, my friend, what I then did! Oh, my dear Chamisso, I blush to mention it even to thee!

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I drew the ill-fated purse from my bosom, and, in a sort of frenzy that raged like a self-fed fire within me, I took out gold—gold—gold—more and more, strewed it on the floor, trampled upon it, and, feasting on its very sound and brilliancy, added coin to coin, rolling and revelling on the gorgeous bed, until I became exhausted.

Thus passed away that day and evening, and, as my door remained locked, night found me still lying on the gold, where, at last, sleep overpowered me.

I awoke—it seemed yet early—my watch had stopped. I felt thirsty, faint, and worn out; for since the preceding morning I had not tasted food. I now cast from me, with loathing and disgust, the very gold with which but a short time before I had satiated my foolish heart. Now I knew not where to put it—I dared not leave it lying there. I examined my purse to see if it would hold it—impossible! Neither of my windows opened on the sea. I had no other resource but, with toil and great fatigue, to drag it to a huge chest which stood in a closet in my room; where I put it all, with the exception of a handful or two. As soon as possible I sent for some refreshment and asked for the landlord.

I entered into some conversation with this man respecting the arrangement of my future establishment. He recommended for my personal attendant one Bendel, whose honest and intelligent countenance immediately preposessed me in his favour. It is this individual

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whose persevering attachment has consoled me in all the miseries of my life, and enabled me to bear up under my wretched lot. I was occupied the whole day in my room with servants in want of a situation, and tradesmen of every description. I decided on my future plans, and purchased various articles of vertu and splendid jewels, in order to get rid of some of my gold; but nothing seemed to diminish the inexhaustible heap.

I now reflected on my situation with the utmost uneasiness. I dared not take a single step beyond my own door, and in the evening I had forty wax tapers lighted before I ventured to leave the shade. I reflected with horror on the frightful encounter with the school-boys, yet I resolved, if I could command sufficient courage, to put the public opinion to a second trial. The nights were now moonlit. Late in the evening I wrapped myself in a large cloak, pulled my hat over my eyes, and, trembling like a criminal, stole out of the house.

I did not venture to leave the friendly shadow of the houses until I had reached a distant part of the town, and then I emerged into the broad moonlight fully prepared to hear my fate from the lips of the passers-by.

Spare me, my beloved friend, the painful recital of all that I was doomed to endure. The women often expressed the deepest sympathy for me—a sympathy not less piercing to my soul than the scoffs of the young people and the

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proud contempt of the men, particularly of the more corpulent who threw an ample shadow before them. A fair and beauteous maiden, apparently accompanied by her parents, who gravely kept looking straight before them, chanced to cast a beaming glance on me; but was evidently startled at perceiving that I was without a shadow, and, hiding her lovely face in her veil, and holding down her head, passed silently on.

This was past all endurance. Tears streamed from my eyes; and, with a heart pierced through and through, I once more took refuge in the shade. I leaned against the houses for support, and reached home at a late hour, worn out with fatigue.

I passed a sleepless night. My first care the following morning was to devise some means of discovering the man in the gray cloak. Perhaps, I might succeed in finding him, and how fortunate if he should be as ill satisfied with his bargain as I was with mine!

I desired Bendel to be sent for, who seemed to possess some tact and ability. I minutely described to him the individual who possessed a treasure without which life itself was rendered a burden to me. I mentioned the time and the place at which I had seen him, named all the persons present, and gave him full particulars.

He departed, and returned late and melancholy. None of Mr. John's servants, none of his guests (and Bendel had spoken to them all), had

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the slightest recollection of the man in the gray cloak. The new telescope was still there, but no one knew how it had come, and the tent and Turkey carpet were still stretched out on the hill. The servants boasted of their master's wealth; but no one seemed to know by what means he had become possessed of these newly acquired luxuries.

Such was the information I gained from Bendel's account; but, in spite of this unsatisfactory result, his zeal and prudence deserved and received my commendation. In a gloomy mood, I made him a sign to withdraw.

"I have, sir," he said, "a message to deliver which I received early this morning from a person at the gate, as I was proceeding to execute the commission in which I have so unfortunately failed. The man's words were these: 'Tell your master, Peter Schlemihl, he will not see me here again. I am about to cross the sea; a favourable wind now calls all the passengers on board; but, in a year and a day hence, I shall have the honour of paying him a visit. Then, in all probability, I shall have a proposal to make to him of a very agreeable nature. Commend me to him most respectfully, with many thanks.' I asked his name, but he said you would remember him."

"What sort of a person was he?" cried I, in great emotion; and Bendel described the man in the gray coat, feature by feature, word for word—in short, the very individual in search of

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whom he had been sent. "How unfortunate!" cried I bitterly; "it was the gray man himself!" Scales, as it were, fell from Bendel's eyes. "Yes, it was he," cried he, "undoubtedly it was he; and fool, madman, that I was, I did not recognise him—I did not, and have betrayed my master!" He then broke out into a torrent of self-reproach; and his distress really excited my compassion. I endeavoured to console him, repeatedly assuring him that I entertained no doubt of his fidelity, and I immediately despatched him to the wharf, to discover, if possible, some trace of the extraordinary being. But on that very morning many vessels which had been detained in port by contrary winds had set sail, all bound to different parts of the globe; and thus the gray man had utterly disappeared.

### II

SOLE depository of my fearful secret, I trembled before the meanest of my attendants, whom, at the same time, I envied; for he possessed a shadow and could venture to go out in the daytime, while I shut myself up in my room day and night, and indulged in all the bitterness of grief.

One individual, however, was daily pining away before my eyes—my faithful Bendel, who was the victim of silent self-reproach, tormenting himself with the idea that he had betrayed the confidence reposed in him by a good master,

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in failing to recognise the individual in quest of whom he had been sent, and with whom he had been led to believe that my melancholy fate was closely connected. Still, I had nothing to accuse him of, as I recognised in the occurrence the mysterious character of the unknown.

In order to leave no means untried, I one day despatched Bendel with a costly ring to the most celebrated artist in the town, desiring him to wait upon me. He came. Dismissing the attendants, I secured the door, placing myself opposite to him, and, after extolling his art, with a heavy heart came to the point, first enjoining the strictest secrecy upon him.

"For a person," said I, "who most unfortunately has lost his shadow, could you paint a false one?"

"Do you speak of the natural shadow?"

"Precisely so."

"But," he asked, "by what awkward negligence can a man have lost his shadow?"

"How it occurred," I answered, "is of no consequence; but it was in this manner" (and here I uttered an unblushing falsehood): "he was travelling in Russia last winter, and one bitterly cold day it froze so hard that his shadow remained fixed to the ground."

"The false shadow that I might paint," said the artist, "would be liable to be lost on the slightest movement, particularly in a person who, from your account, cares so little about his shadow. A person without a shadow should

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keep out of the sun; that is the only safe and rational plan."

He rose and took his leave, casting so penetrating a look at me that I shrunk from it. I sank back in my chair, and hid my face in my hands.

My mode of life thenceforth became somewhat different. It is incredible with what provident foresight Bendel contrived to conceal my deficiency. Everywhere he was before me and with me, providing against every contingency, and, in cases of unlooked-for danger, flying to shield me with his own shadow, for he was taller and stouter than myself. Thus I once more ventured among mankind, and began to take a part in worldly affairs. I was compelled, indeed, to affect certain peculiarities and whims; but in a rich man they seem only appropriate, and, so long as the truth was kept concealed, I enjoyed all the honour and respect that gold could procure.

I now looked forward with more composure to the promised visit of the mysterious unknown at the expiration of the year and a day.

Even the lovely Fanny, whom I again met in several places, without her seeming to recollect that she had ever seen me before, bestowed some notice on me; for wit and understanding were mine in abundance now. When I spoke, I was listened to; and I was at a loss to know how I had so easily acquired the art of commanding attention, and giving tone to the conversation.



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The impression which I perceived I had made upon this fair one completely turned my brain; and this was just what she wished. After that, I pursued her with infinite pains through every obstacle. My vanity was only intent on exciting hers to make a conquest of me; but although the intoxication disturbed my head, it failed to make the least impression on my heart.

One beautiful evening I had, according to my usual custom, assembled a party in a garden, and was walking arm-in-arm with Fanny at a little distance from the rest of the company, and pouring into her ear the usual well-turned phrases, while she was demurely gazing on vacancy, and now and then gently returning the pressure of my hand. The moon suddenly emerged from behind a cloud at our back. Fanny perceived only her own shadow before us. She started, looked at me with terror, and then again on the ground, in search of my shadow. All that was passing in her mind was so strangely depicted in her countenance that I should have burst into a loud fit of laughter had I not suddenly felt my blood run cold within me. I suffered her to fall from my arm in a fainting fit, shot with the rapidity of an arrow through the astonished guests, reached the gate, threw myself into the first conveyance I met with, and returned to the town, where this time, unfortunately, I had left the wary Bendel. He was alarmed on seeing me; but one word explained everything. Post-horses were immediately pro-

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cured. I took with me none of my servants, one cunning knave only excepted, called Rascal, who, by his adroitness, had become very useful to me, and who at present knew nothing of what had occurred. I travelled thirty leagues that night, having left Bendel behind to discharge my servants, pay my debts, and bring me all that was necessary.

When he came up with me next day, I threw myself into his arms, vowing to avoid such follies and to be more careful for the future.

We pursued our journey uninterruptedly over the mountainous frontier; and not until I had placed this lofty barrier between myself and the before-mentioned unlucky town was I persuaded to recruit myself, after my fatigues, in a little-frequented watering-place.

In this watering-place I acted a heroic character, badly studied; and being a novice on such a stage, I forgot my part before a pair of lovely blue eyes.

All possible means were used by the infatuated parents to conclude the match. Discovery put an end to my usual artifices.

The powerful emotions which once swelled my bosom seem now in the retrospect to be poor and insipid—nay, even terrible to me.

Alas, Minna! as I wept for thee the day I lost thee, so do I now weep that I can no longer retrace thine image in my soul.

Am I, then, so far advanced into the vale of years? O fatal effects of maturity! would that

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I could feel one throb, one emotion of former days of enchantment—alas, not one! A solitary being, tossed on the wild ocean of life, long is it since I drained thine enchanted cup to the dregs!

But to return to my narrative. I had sent Bendel to the little town with plenty of money to procure me a suitable habitation. He spent my gold profusely; and, as he expressed himself rather reservedly concerning his distinguished master (for I did not wish to be named), the good people began to form rather extraordinary conjectures.

As soon as my house was ready for my reception, Bendel returned to conduct me to it. We set out on our journey. About a league from the town, on a sunny plain, we were stopped by a crowd of people, arrayed in holiday attire for some festival. The carriage stopped. Music, bells, cannon, were heard; loud acclamations rang through the air.

Before the carriage now appeared in white dresses a chorus of maidens, all of extraordinary beauty; but one of them shone in resplendent loveliness, and eclipsed the rest as the sun eclipses the stars of night. She advanced from the midst of her companions, and, with a lofty yet winning air, blushinglly knelt before me, presenting on a silken cushion a wreath composed of laurel, olive, and roses, and saying something respecting majesty, love, honour, and the like, which I could not comprehend. But the sweet

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and silvery magic of her tones intoxicated my senses and my whole soul: it seemed as if some heavenly apparition were hovering over me. The chorus now began to sing the praises of a good sovereign and the happiness of his subjects. All this, dear Chamisso, took place in the sun: she was kneeling two steps from me, and I, without a shadow, could not dart to her, nor fall on my knees before the angelic being. Oh, what would I not now have given for a shadow! To conceal my shame, agony, and despair, I buried myself in the recesses of the carriage. Bendel at last thought of an expedient; he jumped out of the carriage. I called him back, and gave him out of the casket I had by me a rich diamond coronet, which had been intended for the lovely Fanny.

He stepped forward, and spoke in the name of his master, who, he said, was overwhelmed by so many demonstrations of respect, which he really could not accept as an honour—there must be some error; nevertheless, he begged to express his thanks for the good-will of the worthy townspeople. In the meantime, Bendel had taken the wreath from the cushion, and laid the brilliant crown in its place. He then respectfully raised the lovely girl from the ground, and, at a sign, the clergy, magistrates, and all the deputations withdrew. The crowd separated to allow the horses to pass, and we pursued our way to the town at full gallop, through arches ornamented with flowers and branches of laurel. Salvos of

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artillery again were heard. The carriage stopped at my gate; I hastened through the crowd which curiosity had attracted to witness my arrival. Enthusiastic shouts resounded under my windows, from whence I showered gold amidst the people; and in the evening the whole town was illuminated. Still all remained a mystery to me, and I could not imagine for whom I had been taken. I sent Rascal out to make inquiry; he soon obtained intelligence that the good King of Prussia was travelling through the country under the name of some count; that my *aide-de-camp* had been recognised, and that he had divulged the secret; that, on acquiring the certainty that I would enter their town, the people's joy had known no bounds. However, as they perceived I was determined on preserving the strictest *incognito*, they felt how wrong they had been in too importunately seeking to withdraw the veil; but I had received them so condescendingly and so graciously that they were sure I would forgive them. The whole affair was such capital entertainment to the unprincipled Rascal that he did his best to confirm the good people in their belief, while affecting to reprove them. He gave me a very comical account of the matter, and, seeing that I was amused by it, actually endeavoured to make a virtue of his impudence.

Shall I own the truth? My vanity was flattered by having been mistaken for our revered sovereign. I ordered a banquet to be got ready

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for the following evening, under the trees before my house, and invited the whole town. The mysterious power of my purse, Bendel's exertions, and Rascal's ready invention, made the shortness of the time seem as nothing.

The guests arrived, and were presented to me. The word *majesty* was now dropped, but with the deepest respect and humility I was addressed as the *count*. What could I do? I accepted the title, and from that moment I was known as Count Peter. In the midst of all this festivity, my soul pined for one individual. She came late—she who was the empress of the scene, and wore the emblem of sovereignty on her brow.

She modestly accompanied her parents, and seemed unconscious of her transcendent beauty.

The Ranger of the Forests, his wife and daughter, were presented to me. I was at no loss to make myself agreeable to the parents, but before the daughter I stood like a guilty schoolboy, incapable of speaking a single word.

At length I hesitatingly entreated her to honour my banquet by presiding at it—an office for which her rare endowments pointed her out as admirably fitted. With a blush and an expressive glance, she entreated to be excused; but, in still greater confusion than herself, I respectfully begged her to accept the homage of the first and most devoted of her subjects; and one glance of the count was the same as a command

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to the guests, who vied with one another in acting up to the spirit of the noble host.

In her person majesty, innocence, and grace, in union with beauty, presided over this joyous banquet. Minna's happy parents were elated by the honours conferred upon their child. As for me, I abandoned myself to all the intoxication of delight: I sent for all the jewels, pearls, and precious stones still left to me—the product of my fatal wealth—and, filling two vases, I placed them on the table, in the name of the Queen of the banquet, to be divided among her companions and the remainder of the ladies.

I ordered gold in the meantime to be showered down without ceasing among the happy multitude.

Next morning, Bendel told me in confidence that the suspicions he had long entertained of Rascal's honesty were now reduced to a certainty; he had embezzled many bags of gold the day before.

"Never mind," said I; "let him enjoy his paltry booty. I like to spend it; why should not he? Yesterday he, and all the newly engaged servants whom you had hired, served me honourably, and cheerfully assisted me to enjoy the banquet."

No more was said on the subject. Rascal remained at the head of my domestics. Bendel was my friend and confidant; he had by this time become accustomed to look upon my wealth as inexhaustible, without seeking to inquire into

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its source. He entered into all my schemes, and effectually assisted me in devising methods of spending my money.

The magnificence of my banquet, and my deportment on the occasion, had but strengthened the credulous townspeople in their previous belief.

It appeared soon after, from accounts in the newspapers, that the whole history of the King of Prussia's fictitious journey originated in mere idle report. But a king I was, and a king I must remain by all means—and one of the richest and most royal, although people were at a loss to know where my country was situated. Meanwhile, however, I remained simply Count Peter.

In the midst of my really princely magnificence and profusion, which carried all before it, my own style of living was very simple and retired. I had made it a point to observe the strictest precaution; and with the exception of Bendel no one was permitted, on any pretence whatever, to enter my private apartment. As long as the sun shone, I remained shut up with him; the Count was then said to be deeply occupied in his closet. The numerous couriers whom I kept in constant attendance about matters of no importance were supposed to be the bearers of my despatches. I received company only in the evening under the trees of my garden, or in my saloons, after Bendel's assurance of their being carefully lighted.

Minna was in truth an amiable and excellent



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maiden; her whole soul was wrapped up in me, and in her lowly thoughts of herself she could not imagine how she had deserved a single thought from me. She returned love for love with all the full and youthful fervour of an innocent heart; her love was a true woman's love, with all the devotion and total absence of selfishness which is found only in woman; she lived but in me, her whole soul being bound up in mine, regardless of what her own fate might be.

At one moment I would resolve to confess all to her; then I would determine to fly forever; then I would break out into a flood of bitter tears, and consult Bendel as to the means of meeting her again in the forester's garden.

At times I flattered myself with great hopes from the approaching visit of the unknown, but then wept again as I saw how it must end in disappointment. I had made a calculation of the day fixed on by the fearful being for our interview; for he had said in a year and a day, and I depended on his word.

The parents were worthy old people, devoted to their only child; and our mutual affection was a circumstance so overwhelming that they knew not how to act. They had never dreamed for a moment that the *Count* could bestow a thought on their daughter; but such was the case—he loved and was beloved. The pride of the mother might not have led her to consider such an alliance quite impossible, but so extravagant an idea had never entered the contempla-

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tion of the sounder judgment of the old man. Both were satisfied of the sincerity of my love, and could but send up prayers to Heaven for the happiness of their child.

To her I declared that I was not what I seemed—that although a rich, I was an unspeakably miserable, man—that a curse was on me, which must remain a secret, although the only one between us—yet that I was not without a hope of its being removed—that this poisoned every hour of my life—that I should plunge her with me into the abyss—her, the light and joy, the very soul of my existence. Then she wept because I was unhappy. Oh! Minna was all love and tenderness. To save me one tear, she would gladly have sacrificed her life. Yet she was far from comprehending the full meaning of my words. She still looked upon me as some proscribed prince or illustrious exile; and her vivid imagination had invested her lover with every lofty attribute.

One day I said to her, “Minna, the last day of next month will decide my fate, and perhaps change it for the better; if not, I would sooner die than render you miserable.”

She laid her head on my shoulder to conceal her tears. “Should thy fate be changed,” she said, “I only wish to know that thou art happy; if thy condition is an unhappy one, I will share it with thee, and assist thee to support it.”

“Minna, Minna!” I exclaimed, “recall those rash words—those mad words which have es-

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caped thy lips! Didst thou know the misery and curse—didst thou know who—what—thy lover—— Seest thou not, my Minna, this convulsive shuddering which thrills my whole frame, and that there is a secret in my breast which you cannot penetrate?" She sank sobbing at my feet, and renewed her vows.

Next evening I went again to the forester's garden. I had wrapped myself closely up in my cloak, slouched my hat over my eyes, and advanced toward Minna. As she raised her head and looked at me, she started involuntarily. The apparition of that dreadful night in which I had been seen without a shadow was now standing distinctly before me—it was she herself. Had she recognised me? She was silent and thoughtful. I felt an oppressive load at my heart. I rose from my seat. She laid her head on my shoulder, still silent and in tears. I went away.

I now found her frequently weeping. I became more and more melancholy. Her parents were happy beyond expression. The eventful day approached, threatening and heavy, like a thundercloud. All the evening preceding it, I could scarcely breathe. I had carefully filled a large chest with gold, and sat down in sheer despair to await the appointed time—the twelfth hour.

It struck. I remained with my eyes fixed on the hand of the clock, counting the seconds—the minutes—which pierced my heart like daggers.

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I started at every sound. Finally, daylight appeared. The leaden hours went on. Morning—evening—night came. Hope was fast fading away as the hand advanced. It struck eleven—no one appeared; the last minutes, at length, the first and last stroke of the twelfth hour died away. I sank back in my bed in an agony of tears. In the morning I should, shadowless as I was, claim the hand of my beloved Minna. Toward daybreak a heavy sleep closed my eyes.

### III

It was yet early, when I was suddenly awakened by voices in hot dispute in my antechamber. I listened. Bendel was forbidding Rascal to enter my room, but he swore he would receive no orders from his equals, and insisted on forcing his way. The faithful Bendel reminded him that, if such words reached his master's ears, he would turn him out of an excellent place. Rascal threatened to strike him if he persisted in refusing his entrance.

By this time, having half dressed myself, I angrily threw open the door, and addressing myself to Rascal, inquired what he meant by such disgraceful conduct. He drew back a couple of steps, and coolly answered: "Count Peter, may I beg most respectfully that you will favour me with a sight of your shadow? The sun is now shining brightly in the court below."

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I stood as if struck by a thunderbolt, and for some time was unable to speak. At last I asked him how a servant could dare to behave so toward his master. He interrupted me by saying, quite coolly: "A servant may be a very honourable man, and unwilling to serve a shadowless master. I request my dismissal."

I felt that I must adopt a softer tone, and replied, "But, Rascal, my good fellow, who can have put such strange ideas into your head? How can you imagine——"

He again interrupted me in the same tone—"People say you have no shadow. In short, let me see your shadow, or give me my dismissal."

Bendel, pale and trembling, but more collected than myself, made a sign to me. I had recourse to the all-powerful influence of gold. But even gold had lost its power. Rascal threw it at my feet. "From a shadowless man," he said, "I will take nothing."

Turning his back upon me, and putting on his hat, he then slowly left the room, whistling a tune. I stood, with Bendel, as if petrified, gazing after him

With a deep sigh and a heavy heart, I now prepared to keep my engagement, and to appear in the forester's garden like a criminal before his judge. I entered by the shady arbour, which had received the name of Count Peter's arbour, where we had appointed to meet. The mother advanced with a cheerful air; Minna sat fair and beautiful as the early snow of autumn

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reposing on the departing flowers, soon to be dissolved and lost in the cold stream.

The ranger, with a written paper in his hand, was walking up and down in an agitated manner, and struggling to suppress his feelings—his usually unmoved countenance being flushed one moment, and the next perfectly pale. He came forward as I entered, and in a faltering voice requested an interview with me. The path by which I followed him led to an open spot in the garden, where the sun was shining. I sat down. A long silence ensued, which even the good mother herself did not venture to break. The ranger, in an agitated manner, paced up and down with unequal steps. At last he stood still, and glancing over the paper he held in his hand, he said, addressing me with a penetrating look, "Count Peter, do you know one Peter Schle-mihl?" I was silent.

"A man," he continued, "of excellent character and extraordinary endowments."

He paused for an answer

"And supposing I myself were that very man?" I queried.

"You!" he exclaimed passionately, "he has lost his shadow!"

"Oh, my suspicion is true!" cried Minna; "I have long known it—he has no shadow!" And she threw herself into her mother's arms, who, convulsively clasping her to her bosom, reproached her for having, to her hurt, so long kept such a secret. But, like the fabled Are-

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thusa, her tears, as from a fountain, flowed the more abundantly, and her sobs increased at my approach.

"And so," said the ranger fiercely, "you have not scrupled, with unparalleled shamelessness, to deceive both her and me. You pretended to love her, forsooth!—her whom you have reduced to the state in which you now see her. See how she weeps!—oh, shocking, shocking!"

By this time I had lost all presence of mind, and answered confusedly, "After all, it is but a shadow, a mere shadow, which a man can do very well without; and, really, it is not worth while to make all this fuss about such a trifle." Feeling the groundlessness of what I was saying, I ceased, and no one vouchsafed a reply. At last I added, "What is lost to-day may be found to-morrow."

"Be pleased, sir," continued the ranger, in great wrath—"be pleased to explain how you have lost your shadow."

Here again an excuse was ready: "A boor of a fellow," said I, "one day trod so rudely on my shadow that he tore a large hole in it. I sent it to be repaired—for gold can do wonders—and yesterday I expected it home again."

"Very well," answered the ranger. "You are a suitor for my daughter's hand, and so are others. As a father, I am bound to provide for her. I will give you three days to seek your shadow. Return to me in the course of that time with a well-fitted shadow, and you shall re-

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ceive a hearty welcome; otherwise, on the fourth day—remember, on the fourth day—my daughter becomes the wife of another.”

I attempted to say a word to Minna; but, sobbing more violently, she clung still closer to her mother, who made a sign for me to withdraw. I obeyed—and now the world seemed shut out from me forever.

Having escaped from the affectionate care of Bendel, I wandered wildly through the neighbouring woods and meadows. Drops of anguish fell from my brow; deep groans burst from my bosom; frenzied despair raged within me.

I knew not how long this had lasted, when I felt myself seized by the sleeve on a sunny heath. I stopped and, looking up, beheld the gray-coated man, who appeared to have run himself out of breath in pursuing me. He immediately began: “I had,” said he, “appointed this day; but your impatience anticipated it. All, however, may yet be right. Take my advice—redeem your shadow, which is at your command, and return immediately to the ranger’s garden, where you will be well received, and all the past will seem a mere joke. As for Rascal—who has betrayed you in order to pay his addresses to Minna—leave him to me; he is a fit subject for me.”

I stood like one in a dream. “This day?” I considered again. He was right—I had made a mistake of a day. I felt in my bosom for the



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purse. He perceived my intention, and drew back.

"No, Count Peter, the purse is in good hands—pray keep it." I gazed at him with looks of astonishment and inquiry. "I beg only a trifle as a token of remembrance. Be so good as to sign this memorandum." On the parchment, which he held out to me, were these words: "By virtue of these presents, to which I have appended my signature, I hereby bequeath my soul to the holder, after its natural separation from my body."

I gazed in mute astonishment alternately at the paper and at the gray unknown. In the meantime, he had dipped a new pen in a drop of blood which was issuing from a scratch in my hand just made by a thorn. He presented it to me. "Who are you?" at last I exclaimed. "What can it signify?" he answered; "do you not perceive who I am? A poor devil—a sort of scholar and philosopher, who obtains but poor thanks from his friends for his admirable arts, and whose only amusement on earth consists in his small experiments. But just sign this; to the right, exactly below—Peter Schlemihl."

I shook my head, and replied, "Excuse me, sir; I cannot sign that."

"Cannot!" he exclaimed; "and why not?"

"Because it appears to me a hazardous thing to exchange my soul for my shadow."

"Hazardous!" he exclaimed, bursting into a

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loud laugh. "And, pray, may I be allowed to inquire what sort of a thing your soul is?—have you ever seen it?—and what do you mean to do with it after your death? You ought to think yourself fortunate in meeting with a customer who, during your life, in exchange for this infinitely minute quantity, this galvanic principle, this polarised agency, or whatever other foolish name you may give it, is willing to give you something substantial—in a word, your own identical shadow, by virtue of which you will obtain your beloved Minna, and arrive at the accomplishment of all your wishes. Or do you prefer giving up the poor young girl to the power of that contemptible scoundrel, Rascal? Nay, you shall behold her with your own eyes. Come here, I will lend you a magic cap (he drew something out of his pocket), and we will enter the ranger's garden unseen."

But I considered the past as irrevocable, my own misery as inevitable, and, turning to the gray man, I said: "I have exchanged my shadow for this very extraordinary purse, and I have sufficiently repented it. For Heaven's sake, let the transaction be declared null and void!" He shook his head, while his countenance assumed an expression of the most sinister cast. I continued: "I will make no exchange whatever, even for the sake of my shadow, nor will I sign the paper. As for the incognito visit you propose, it would afford you far more entertainment than it could possibly give me. Accept

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my excuses, therefore, and, since it must be so, let us part."

"I am sorry, Mr. Schlemihl, that you thus obstinately persist in rejecting my friendly offer. Perhaps another time I may be more fortunate. Farewell! May we shortly meet again! But, *à propos*, allow me to show you that I do not undervalue my purchase, but preserve it carefully."

So saying, he drew my shadow out of his pocket. Shaking out its folds cleverly, he stretched it out at his feet in the sun—so that he stood between two obedient shadows, his own and mine, which was compelled to follow and comply with his every movement.

On again beholding my poor shadow after so long a separation, and seeing it degraded to so vile a bondage at the very time that I was so terribly in want of it, my heart was ready to burst, and I wept bitterly. The detested wretch stood exulting over his prey, and unblushingly renewed his proposal. "One stroke of your pen, and the unhappy Minna is rescued from the clutches of the villain Rascal, and transferred to the arms of the high-born Count Peter—merely a stroke of your pen!"

My tears broke out with renewed violence; but I turned away from him, and made a sign for him to be gone.

Alone on the wild heath, I disburdened my heart of an insupportable load by giving free vent to my tears. But I saw no bounds, no

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relief, to my surpassing wretchedness. Thus I passed three melancholy days.

On the morning of the fourth I found myself on a sandy plain, basking in the rays of the sun, and sitting on a fragment of rock; for it was sweet to enjoy the genial warmth of which I had been so long deprived. Despair still preyed on my heart. Suddenly a slight sound startled me; I looked round, prepared to fly, but saw no one. On the sunlit sand before me flitted the shadow of a man not unlike my own; and, wandering about alone, it seemed to have lost its master. This sight powerfully excited me. "Shadow!" thought I, "art thou in search of thy master? In me thou shalt find him." And I sprang forward to seize it, fancying that, could I succeed in treading so exactly in its traces as to step in its footmarks, it would attach itself to me, and in time become accustomed to me, and follow all my movements.

The shadow, as I moved, took to flight, and I began a hot chase after the airy fugitive, excited solely by the hope of being delivered from my present dreadful situation: the bare idea inspired me with fresh strength and vigour.

The shadow fled toward a distant wood, among whose shades I must necessarily have lost it. Seeing this, my heart beat wild with fright; my ardour increased, and lent wings to my speed. I was evidently gaining on the shadow—I came nearer and nearer—I was within reach of it, when it suddenly stopped and turned toward

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me. Like a lion darting on its prey, I made a powerful spring, and fell unexpectedly upon a hard substance. Then followed, from an invisible hand, the most terrible blows in the ribs that any one ever received. The effect of my terror made me endeavour convulsively to strike and grasp at the unseen object before me. The rapidity of my motions brought me to the ground, where I found myself lying stretched out with a man under me, whom I held tight, and who now became visible.

The whole affair was now manifest. The man had undoubtedly possessed the bird's nest which communicates its charm of invisibility to its possessor, though not equally so to his shadow; and this nest he had thrown away. I looked all round, and soon discovered the shadow of this invisible nest. I sprang toward it, and was fortunate enough to seize the precious booty, and immediately became invisible.

Ardently desiring to return to the ranger's, anxiety hastened my steps. Unseen, I met some peasants coming from the town; they were talking of me, of Rascal, and of the ranger. I would not stay to listen to their conversation, but proceeded on. My bosom thrilled with expectation as I entered the ranger's garden. At this moment I heard something like a hollow laugh which caused me involuntarily to shudder.

Suddenly my head was, as it were, enveloped in a mist. I looked up, and oh, horror! the gray-coated man was at my side, peering into

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my face with a satanic grin. He had extended over my head the magic cap that he wore. His shadow and my own were lying together at his feet in perfect amity. He kept twirling in his hand the well-known parchment with an air of indifference; and while the ranger, absorbed in thought and intent upon his paper, paced up and down the arbour, my tormentor confidentially leaned toward me, and whispered: "So, Mr. Schlemihl, you have at length accepted my invitation; and here we sit, 'two heads under one hood,' as the saying is. Well, well! all in good time. But now you can return me my bird's nest—you have no further use for it, and I am sure you are too honourable a man to withhold it from me. No need of thanks, I assure you; I had infinite pleasure in lending it to you. I am still of opinion that you ought to redeem your shadow and claim your bride (for it is yet time); and as to Rascal, he shall dangle at a rope's end—no difficult matter, so long as we can find a bit. As a mark of friendship, I will give you my cap into the bargain."

The mother now came out with Minna. Her father took her hand, and addressed her in the most affectionate manner:

"My own dear, good child—my Minna—will act reasonably, and not afflict her poor old father, who only wishes to make her happy. A suitor has appeared for you in the person of a man who does not fear the sun—an honourable man—no prince indeed, but a man worth millions of

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ducats, a man, too, who will make my dear child happy—nay, do not oppose me—be my own good, dutiful child—allow your loving father to provide for you; dry up those tears. Promise to bestow your hand on Mr. Rascal. Speak, my child; will you not?"

Minna could scarcely summon strength to reply that she had now no longer any hopes or desires on earth, and that she was entirely at her father's disposal. Rascal was, therefore, immediately sent for, and entered with his usual forwardness; but Minna in the meantime had swooned away.

My detested companion looked at me indignantly, and whispered, "Can you endure this? Have you no blood in your veins?" He instantly pricked my finger, which bled. "Yes, positively," he exclaimed, "you have some blood left! Come, sign." The parchment and pen were in my hand——

### IV

I KNOW not whether to ascribe it to excitement of mind, exhaustion of physical strength (for, during the last few days, I had scarcely tasted anything), or the antipathy I felt to the society of my fiendish companion, but, just as I was about to sign the fatal paper, I fell into a deep swoon, and remained for a long time as if dead. The first sounds which greeted my ear on recovering my consciousness were those of

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cursing and imprecation. I opened my eyes—it was dusk; my hateful companion was overwhelming me with reproaches: "Is not this behaving like an old woman? Come, rise up, and finish quickly what you were going to do. Or perhaps you have changed your mind, and prefer to lie there groaning?"

He continued unceasingly in the same tone, uttering constant sarcasms about gold and shadows, till I was completely bewildered.

To fly from him was impossible. I wended my way through the empty streets toward my own house, which I could scarcely recognise—the windows were broken to pieces, no light was visible, the doors were shut, and the bustle of domestics had ceased. My companion burst into a loud laugh. "Yes, yes," said he, "you see the state of things: however, you will find your friend Bendel at home. He will have a fine story to tell! So I wish you a very good night—may we shortly meet again!"

I had repeatedly rung the bell, when at last a light appeared, and Bendel inquired from within who was there. The poor fellow could scarcely contain himself at the sound of my voice. The door flew open, and we were locked in each other's arms. I found him sadly changed; he was looking ill and feeble. I, too, was altered; my hair had become quite gray. He conducted me through the desolate apartments to an inner room, which had escaped the general wreck. After partaking of some



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refreshment, we seated ourselves. He then told me how the mob, at Rascal's instigation, had assembled violently before the house, broken the windows, and, by all sorts of excesses, completely satiated their fury. Thus had they treated their benefactor. My servants had fled in all directions. The police had banished me from the town as a suspicious character, and granted me an interval of twenty-four hours to leave the district. Bendel added many particulars respecting Rascal's wealth and marriage. This villain, it seems—who was the author of all the measures taken against me—became possessed of my secret nearly from the beginning, and, tempted by the love of money, had supplied himself with a key to my chest, and from that time had been laying the foundation of his present wealth. Bendel related all this with many tears, and wept for joy that I was once more safely restored to him, after all his fears and anxieties for me. In me, however, such a state of things only awoke despair.

My dreadful fate now stared me in the face in all its gigantic and unchangeable horror. The source of tears was exhausted within me; no groans escaped my breast; but, with cool indifference, I bared my unprotected head to the blast. "Bendel," said I, "you know my fate; this heavy visitation is a punishment for my early sins: but as for thee, my innocent friend, I can no longer permit thee to share my destiny. I will depart this very night—saddle

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me a horse—I will set out alone. Remain here, Bendel—I insist upon it: there must be some chests of gold still left in the house—take them; they are thine. I shall be a restless and solitary wanderer on the face of the earth; but, should better days arise, and fortune once more smile propitiously on me, then I will not forget thy steady fidelity; for, in hours of deep distress, thy faithful bosom has been the depository of my sorrows.” With a bursting heart, the worthy Bendel prepared to obey this last command of his master; for I was deaf to all his arguments and blind to his tears. My horse was brought—I pressed my weeping friend to my bosom—threw myself into the saddle, and, under the friendly shades of night, quitted this sepulchre of my existence, indifferent which road my horse should take. Henceforth, on this side the grave, I had neither wishes, hopes, nor fears.

After a short time I was joined by a traveller on foot, who, after walking for a while by the side of my horse, observed that, as we both seemed to be travelling the same road, he would beg my permission to lay his cloak on the horse’s back behind me, to which I silently assented. He thanked me with easy politeness for this trifling favour, praised my horse, and then took occasion to extol the happiness and the power of the rich, and fell, I scarcely know how, into a sort of conversation with himself, in which I merely acted the part of listener. He unfolded

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his views of human life and of the world, and, touching on metaphysics, demanded an answer from that cloudy science to the question of questions—the answer that should solve all mysteries. He deduced one problem from another in a very lucid manner, and then proceeded to their solution. I listened with pleasure to this eloquently gifted man, who diverted my attention from my own sorrows to the speaker; and he would have secured my entire acquiescence if he had appealed to my heart as well as to my judgment.

In the meantime the hours had passed away, and morning had already dawned imperceptibly in the horizon. Looking up, I shuddered as I beheld in the east all those splendid hues that announce the rising sun. At this hour, when all natural shadows are seen in their full proportions, not a fence or a shelter of any kind could I descry in this open country—and I was not alone! I cast a glance at my companion, and shuddered again—it was the man in the gray coat himself! He laughed at my surprise, and, without giving me time to speak, said, “You see, according to the fashion of this world, mutual convenience binds us together for a time; there is plenty of time to think of parting. The road here along the mountain, which perhaps has escaped your notice, is the only one that you can prudently take; into the valley you dare not descend—the path over the mountain would but reconduct you to the town which you have left. My road, too, lies this way. I perceive you

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change colour at the rising sun—I have no objection to letting you have the loan of your shadow during our journey, and in return you may not be indisposed to tolerate my society. You now have no Bendel, but I will act for him. I regret that you are not over-fond of me; that need not, however, prevent you from accepting my poor services. The devil is not so black as he is painted. Yesterday you provoked me, I own; but now that is all forgotten, and you must confess I have succeeded in beguiling the wearisomeness of your journey. Come, take your shadow, and make a trial of it."

The sun had risen, and we were meeting with passengers; so I reluctantly assented. With a smile, he immediately let my shadow glide down to the ground, and I beheld it take its place by that of my horse and gaily trot along with me. My feelings were anything but pleasant. I rode through groups of country people, who respectfully made way for the well-mounted stranger. Thus I proceeded, occasionally stealing a side-long glance with a beating heart from my horse at the shadow once more my own, but now, alas! accepted as a loan from a stranger, or rather a fiend. He moved on carelessly at my side, whistling a song. He being on foot, and I on horseback, the temptation to hazard a silly project occurred to me; so, suddenly turning my bridle, I set spurs to my horse, and at full gallop struck into a by-path. My shadow, on the sudden movement of my horse, glided away, and

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stood on the road quietly awaiting the approach of its legal owner. I was obliged to return abashed toward the gray man; who very coolly finished his song, and, with a laugh, set my shadow to rights again, reminding me that it was at my option to have it irrevocably fixed to me, by purchasing it on just and equitable terms. "I hold you," said he, "by the shadow; you seek in vain to get rid of me. A rich man like you requires a shadow, unquestionably; you only are to blame for not having seen this sooner."

I now continued my journey on the same road; every convenience and even luxury of life was mine; I moved about in peace and freedom, for I possessed a shadow, though a borrowed one; and all the respect due to wealth was paid to me. But a deadly disease preyed on my heart. My extraordinary companion never stirred from my side, and tormented me with constant assurances that a day would most certainly come, when, if it were only to get rid of him, I should gladly comply with his terms, and redeem my shadow. I stood in awe of him; I had placed myself in his power. Since he had effected my return to the pleasures of the world, which I had resolved to shun, he had the perfect mastery of me. His eloquence was irresistible, and at times I almost thought he was in the right. On one point, nevertheless, I was immovable: since I had sacrificed my love for Minna, and thereby blighted the happiness of

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my whole life, I would not now, for all the shadows in the universe, be induced to sign away my soul to this being.

One day we were sitting by the entrance of a cavern, much visited by strangers who ascended the mountain: the rushing noise of a subterranean torrent resounded from the fathomless abyss, the depths of which exceeded all calculation. He was, according to his favourite custom, employing all the powers of his lavish fancy, and all the charm of the most brilliant colouring, to depict to me what I might effect in the world by virtue of my purse, when once I had recovered my shadow.

"You seem to forget," said I, "that I tolerate your presence only on certain conditions, and that I am to retain perfect freedom of action."

"You have but to command, and I depart," was all his reply.

The threat was familiar to me; I was silent. He then began to fold up my shadow. I turned pale, but allowed him to continue. A long silence ensued, which he was the first to break:

"I will go. Only allow me to inform you how you may at any time recall me whenever you have a mind to see your most humble servant. You have only to shake your purse; the sound of the gold will bring me to you in an instant. In this world, every one consults his own advantage; you see I have thought of yours, and

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clearly confer upon you a new power. Oh, this purse! it would still prove a powerful bond between us, had the moth begun to devour your shadow.—But enough: you hold me by my gold, and may command your servant at any distance. You know that I can be very serviceable to my friends; and that the rich are my peculiar care—this you have observed. As to your shadow, allow me to say you can redeem it on only one condition."

Recollections of former days came over me; and I hastily asked him whether he had ever obtained Mr. Thomas John's signature.

He smiled, and said, "It was by no means necessary from so excellent a friend."

"Where is he? For God's sake tell me! I insist upon knowing!"

With some hesitation, he put his hand into his pocket, and drew out, by the hair of the head, the altered and pallid form of Mr. John, whose livid lips uttered the awful words, "*Justo judicio Dei, judicatus sum; justo judicio Dei, condemnatus sum*"—"By the just judgment of God, I am judged; by the just judgment of God, I am condemned." I was horror-struck; and, instantly hurling the jingling purse into the abyss, I exclaimed: "Wretch! in the name of Heaven, I conjure you to be gone! Away from my sight! Never appear before me again!" With a dark expression on his countenance, he arose, and immediately vanished behind the huge rocks which surrounded the place.

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### V

I WAS now left alike without gold and without a shadow; but a heavy load was taken from my breast, and I felt cheerful. Had not my Minna been irrecoverably lost to me, or even had I been perfectly free from self-reproach on her account, I felt that happiness might yet have been mine. At present, I was lost in doubt as to my future course. I examined my pockets, and found I had a few gold pieces still left, which I counted with feelings of great satisfaction. I had left my horse at the inn, and was ashamed to return, or, at all events, I must wait till the sun had set, which at present was high in the heavens. I laid myself down under a shady tree, and fell into a peaceful sleep.

When I opened my eyes the sun was visible in the east: I must have slept the whole night. I looked upon this as a warning not to return to the inn, and, resigning myself to Providence, I decided on taking a by-road that led through the wooded declivity of the mountain. I never once cast a glance behind me; nor did it ever occur to me to return, as I might have done, to Bendel, whom I had left in affluence. My present garb was very humble—consisting of an old black coat I had formerly worn at Berlin—and which, by some chance, was the first I had put my hand on before setting out on this journey—a travelling-cap, and an old pair of boots. I



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cut down a knotted stick in memory of the spot, and commenced my pilgrimage.

In the forest I met an aged peasant, who gave me a friendly greeting, and with whom I entered into conversation, requesting, as a traveller desirous of information, some particulars relative to the road, the country, and its inhabitants, the productions of the mountain, and the like. He replied to my various inquiries with readiness and intelligence. At last we reached the bed of a mountain-torrent, which had laid waste a considerable tract of the forest; I inwardly shuddered at the idea of the open sunshine. I suffered the peasant to go before me. In the middle of the very place which I dreaded so much, he suddenly stopped, and turned back to give me an account of this inundation. Instantly perceiving that I had no shadow, he broke off abruptly, and exclaimed, "How is this? You have no shadow!"

"Alas, alas!" said I, "in a long and serious illness, I had the misfortune to lose my hair, my nails, and my shadow. Look, good father, although my hair has grown again, it is quite white, and, at my age, my nails are still very short, and my poor shadow seems to have left me, never to return."

"Ah!" said the old man, shaking his head, "no shadow! that was, indeed, a terrible illness, sir."

But he did not resume his narrative; and, at the very first cross-road we came to, he left me without uttering a syllable. Fresh tears flowed

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from my eyes, and my cheerfulness had fled. With a heavy heart, I travelled on, avoiding all society. I plunged into the deepest shades of the forest; and often, to avoid a sunny tract of country, I waited for hours till every human being had left it, and I could pass it unobserved. In the evenings I took shelter in the villages. I bent my steps to a mine in the mountains, where I hoped to meet with work underground; for aside from the fact that my present situation compelled me to provide for my own support, I felt that only incessant and laborious occupation could divert my mind from dwelling on painful subjects. A few rainy days assisted me materially on my journey; but it was to the no small detriment of my boots, the soles of which were better suited to Count Peter than to the poor foot-traveller. I was soon barefoot, and a new purchase must be made. The following morning I began an earnest search in a market-place, where a fair was being held. I saw in one of the booths new and second-hand boots set out for sale. I was a long time selecting and bargaining; I much wished to have a new pair, but was frightened at the extravagant price, and so was obliged to content myself with a second-hand pair, still pretty good and strong, which the beautiful fair-haired youth who kept the booth handed over to me with a cheerful smile, as he wished me a prosperous journey. I went on, and left the place immediately by the northern gate.

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I was so lost in my own thoughts that I walked along scarcely knowing how or where. I was calculating the chances of my reaching the mine by the evening, and considering how I should introduce myself. I had not gone two hundred paces when I perceived that I was not in the right road. I looked around, and found myself in a wild-looking forest of ancient firs, where, apparently, the stroke of the axe had never been heard. A few steps more brought me amid huge rocks covered with moss and saxifragous plants, between which whole fields of snow and ice were extended. The air was intensely cold. I looked round, and the forest had disappeared behind me; a few steps more, and there was the stillness of death itself. The icy plain on which I stood stretched to an immeasurable distance, and a thick cloud rested upon it; the sun was of a red blood-colour at the verge of the horizon; the cold was insupportable. I could not imagine what had happened to me. The benumbing frost made me quicken my pace. I heard a distant sound of waters; and, at one step more, I stood on the icy shore of some ocean. Innumerable droves of seals hurried past me, and plunged into the waves. I continued my way along this coast, and again met with rocks, plains, birch and fir forests, and yet only a few minutes had elapsed. It was now intensely hot. I looked about, and suddenly found myself amidst some fertile rice-fields and mulberry-trees. Sitting down under their shade, I found

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by my watch that it was just a quarter of an hour since I left the village market. I fancied it was a dream; but no, I was indeed awake, as I felt by the experiment of biting my tongue. I closed my eyes in order to collect my scattered thoughts. Presently I heard unintelligible words uttered in a nasal tone, and I beheld two Chinese, whose Asiatic physiognomies were not to be mistaken, even had their costume not betrayed their origin. They were addressing me in the language and with the salutations of their country. I arose and drew back a couple of steps. They had disappeared; the landscape was entirely changed; the rice-fields had given place to trees and woods. I examined some of the trees and plants around me, and ascertained such of them as I was acquainted with to be productions of the southern part of Asia. I made one step toward a particular tree, and again all was changed. I now moved on like a recruit at drill, taking slow and measured steps, and gazing, with astonished eyes, at the wonderful variety of regions, plains, meadows, mountains, steppes, and sandy deserts which passed in succession before me. I had now no doubt that I had seven-league boots on my feet.

I fell on my knees in silent gratitude, shedding tears of thankfulness, for I now saw clearly what was to be my future condition. Shut out by early sins from all human society, I was offered amends for the privation of Nature herself, whom I had ever loved. The earth was granted

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me as a rich garden; the knowledge of her operations was to be the study and object of my life. Rising, I took a hasty survey of this new field, where I hoped afterward to reap a rich harvest.

I stood on the heights of Thibet: the sun I had lately beheld in the east was now sinking in the west. I traversed Asia from east to west and thence passed into Africa, which I curiously examined at repeated visits in all directions. As I gazed on the ancient pyramids and temples of Egypt I descried, in the sandy deserts near Thebes of the hundred gates, the caves where Christian hermits dwelt of old.

My determination was instantly fixed: here should be my future dwelling. I chose one of the most secluded, but roomy, comfortable, and inaccessible to the jackals.

I stepped over from the pillars of Hercules to Europe; and, having taken a survey of its northern and southern countries, I passed by the north of Asia, on the polar glaciers, to Greenland and America, visiting both parts of this continent; and the winter, which was already at its height in the south, drove me quickly back from Cape Horn to the north. I waited till daylight had risen in the east of Asia, and then, after a short rest, continued my pilgrimage. I followed, in both the Americas, the vast chain of the Andes, once considered the loftiest on our globe. I stepped carefully and slowly from one summit to another, sometimes over snowy

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heights, sometimes over flaming volcanoes, often breathless from fatigue. At last I reached St. Elias's mountain, and sprang over Behring's Straits into Asia; I followed the eastern coast in its various windings, carefully observing which of the neighbouring isles was accessible to me. From the peninsula of Malacca my boots carried me to Sumatra, Java, Bal, and Lombok. I made many attempts—often with danger, and always unsuccessfully—to force my way over the numerous little islands and rocks with which this sea is studded, wishing to find a northwest passage to Borneo and other islands of the Archipelago.

In making a visit to Europe, it was my care to provide myself with the articles of which I stood most in need. First of all a drag, to act on my boots; for I had experienced the inconvenience of these whenever I wished to shorten my steps and examine surrounding objects more fully. A pair of slippers to go over the boots served the purpose effectually; and from that time I carried two pairs about me, because I frequently cast them off from my feet in my botanical investigations, without having time to pick them up when threatened by the approach of lions, men, or hyenas. My excellent watch, owing to the short duration of my movements, was also an admirable chronometer on these occasions. I wanted, besides, a sextant, a few philosophical instruments, and some books. To purchase these things I made several un-

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willing journeys to London and Paris, choosing a time when I could be hid by the favouring clouds. As all my ill-gotten gold was exhausted, I carried over from Africa some ivory, which is there so plentiful, in payment of my purchases—taking care, however, to pick out the smallest teeth, in order not to overburden myself. I had thus soon provided myself with all that I wanted, and now entered on a new mode of life as a student—wandering over the globe—measuring the height of the mountains, and the temperature of the air and of the springs—observing the manners and habits of animals—investigating plants and flowers. From the equator to the pole, and from the new world to the old, I was constantly engaged in repeating and comparing my experiments.

One day, as I was gathering lichens and algæ on the northern coast, with the drag on my boots, a bear suddenly made his appearance, and was stealing toward me round the corner of a rock. After kicking off my slippers, as I thought, I attempted to step across to an island, by means of a rock that projected from the waves in the intermediate space, and that served as a stepping-stone. I reached the rock safely with one foot, but instantly fell into the sea with the other, one of my slippers having inadvertently remained on. The cold was intense, and I escaped this imminent peril at the risk of my life. On coming ashore, I hastened to the Libyan

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sands to dry myself in the sun, but the heat affected my head so much, that, in a fit of illness, I staggered back to the north. In vain I sought relief by change of place—hurrying from east to west, and from west to east—now in climes of the south, now in those of the north; sometimes I rushed into daylight, sometimes into the shades of night. I know not how long this lasted. A burning fever raged in my veins; with extreme anguish, I felt my senses leaving me. Suddenly, by an unlucky accident, I trod upon some one's foot, and in return received a blow that laid me senseless.

On recovering my senses I found myself lying comfortably in a good bed, which, with many other beds, stood in a spacious and handsome apartment. Some one was watching by me; people seemed to be walking from one bed to another; they came to mine, and spoke of me as *Number Twelve*. On the wall, at the foot of my bed—it was no dream, for I distinctly read it—on a black marble tablet was inscribed my name, in large letters of gold:

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Underneath were two rows of letters in smaller characters, which I was too feeble to connect together, and I closed my eyes again.

I now heard something read aloud, in which I distinctly noted the words, "Peter Schlemihl," but could not gather the full meaning. I saw a



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man of benevolent aspect, and a very beautiful female dressed in black, standing near my bed; their countenances were not unknown to me, but in my weak state I could not remember who they were. Some time elapsed, and I began to regain my strength. I was called *Number Twelve*, and, from my long beard, was supposed to be a Jew, but was not the less carefully nursed on that account. No one seemed to perceive that I was destitute of a shadow. My boots, I was assured, together with everything found on me when I was brought here, were in safe keeping, and would be given up to me on my restoration to health. This place was called the SCHLEMIHLIUM. The daily recitation I had heard was an exhortation to pray for Peter Schlemihl as the founder and benefactor of this institution. The benevolent-looking man whom I had seen by my bedside was Bendel; the beautiful lady in black was Minna.

I had been enjoying the advantages of the Schlemihlium without being recognised, learning, further, that I was in Bendel's native town, where he had employed a part of my once unhallowed gold in founding a hospital in my name, under his superintendence, and that its unfortunate inmates daily pronounced blessings on me. Minna had become a widow: an unhappy lawsuit had deprived Rascal of his life, and Minna of the greater part of her property. Her parents were no more, and here she dwelt

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in widowed piety, wholly devoting herself to works of mercy.

One day, as she stood by the side of Number Twelve's bed with Bendel, he said to her, "Noble lady, why expose yourself so frequently to this unhealthy atmosphere? Has fate dealt so harshly with you as to render you desirous of death?"

"By no means, Mr. Bendel," she replied; "since I have wakened from my long dream, all has gone well with me. I now neither wish for death nor fear it, and think on the future and on the past with equal serenity. Do you not also feel an inward satisfaction in thus paying a pious tribute of gratitude and love to your old master and friend?"

"Thanks be to God, I do, noble lady," said he. "Ah, how wonderfully has everything fallen out! How thoughtlessly have we sipped joys and sorrows from the full cup now drained to the last drop; and we might fancy the past a mere prelude to the real scene for which we now wait armed by experience. How different has been the reality! Yet, let us not regret the past, but rather rejoice that we have not lived in vain. As respects our old friend also, I have a firm hope that it is now better with him than formerly."

"I trust so, too," answered Minna; and, so saying, she passed by me, and they departed.

This conversation made a deep impression on me, and I hesitated whether I should discover

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myself or depart unknown. At last I decided, and, asking for pen and paper, wrote as follows:

"Matters are indeed better with your old friend than formerly. He has repented, and his repentance has led to forgiveness."

I was now able to rise, for I felt much stronger. The keys of a little chest near my bed were given me; in it I found all my effects. I put on my clothes; fastened my botanical case round me—wherein, with delight, I found my northern lichens all safe—put on my boots, and leaving my note on the table, left the gates, and was speedily far advanced on the road to Thebes.

In my home I found everything exactly in the order in which I had left it. I returned by degrees, as my increasing strength allowed me, to my old occupations and usual mode of life, from which I had been kept back a whole year by my fall into the Polar Ocean. And this, dear Chamisso, is the life I am still leading.

So far as my boots would carry me, I have observed and studied our globe and its conformation, its mountains and temperature, the atmosphere in its various changes, the influences of the magnetic power; in fact, I have studied all living creation—and most especially the kingdom of plants—more profoundly than any one of our race. I have arranged all the facts in proper order, to the best of my ability, in different works. The consequences deducible from these facts, and my views respecting them, I have succinctly recorded in various essays and

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dissertations. I have settled the geography of the interior of Africa and of the Arctic regions, of the interior of Asia and of its eastern coast. My *Historia stirpium plantarum utriusque orbis* is an extensive fragment of my *Systema naturæ*. Besides increasing the number of our known species by more than a third, I have also contributed somewhat to the natural system of plants and to a knowledge of their geography. I am now deeply engaged on my *Fauna*, and shall take care to have my manuscripts sent to the University of Berlin before my decease.

I have selected thee, my dear Chamisso, to be the guardian of my wonderful history, thinking that, when I have left this world, it may afford valuable instruction to the living. As for thee, Chamisso, if thou wouldst live amongst thy fellow-creatures, learn to value thy shadow more than gold; if thou wouldst only live to thyself and thy nobler part—in this thou needest no counsel.

# THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL

BY

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE sexton stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house, pulling busily at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked side-long at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week days. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the semblance of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly his meditative way toward the meeting-house. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

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"Are you sure it is our parson?" inquired Goodman Gray of the sexton.

"Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," replied the sexton. "He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute, of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, having to preach a funeral sermon."

The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person, of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday's garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape which entirely concealed his features except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

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"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meeting-house. "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

A rumour of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house, and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads toward the door; many stood upright, and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation of his people. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired great-grandsire, who occupied an arm-chair in the centre of the aisle. It was strange to observe how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once

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withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath as he gave out the psalm; it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?"

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them.

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect



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them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said—at least, no violence; and yet, with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapt in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned the Sabbath day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery; while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened

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by the midnight lamp as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary heads, saluted the middle-aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honour of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellect," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest

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part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

"Truly do I," replied the lady; "and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!"

"Men sometimes are so," said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered.

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rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy. From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial hopes that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth, and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them, and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

"Why do you look back?" said one in the procession to his partner

"I had a fancy," replied she, "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand."

"And so had I, at the same moment," said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which

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often excited a sympathetic smile where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one where they tolled the wedding knell. After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror

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with which it overwhelmed all others His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows It was the first item of news that the tavern-keeper told to his guests The children babbled of it on their way to school One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his play-mates that the panic seized himself and he well-nigh lost his wits by his own waggery \*

It was remarkable that of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr Hooper, wherefore he did this thing Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers, nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly re-

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monstrance. There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a general synod.

But there was one person in the village unappalled by the awe with which the black veil

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had impressed all besides herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: it was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on."

Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly.

"There is an hour to come," said he, "when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then."

"Your words are a mystery, too," returned the young lady. "Take away the veil from them, at least."



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"Elizabeth, I will," said he, "so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it, ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!"

"What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

"If it be a sign of mourning," replied Mr Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil."

"But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?" urged Elizabeth. "Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away with this scandal!"

The colour rose into her cheeks as she intimated the nature of the rumours that were already abroad in the village. But Mr Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

"If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; "and if I cover it

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for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

"And do you feel it then, at last?" said he mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

"Have patience with me, Elizabeth!" cried he, passionately. "Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil—it is not for eternity! O! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!"

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"Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face," said she.

"Never! It cannot be!" replied Mr. Hooper.

"Then farewell!" said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long, shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial-ground; for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the grave-

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stones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel more strongly than aught else that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave plausibility to the whispers that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said that ghost and fiend consorted with him there. With self-shudderings and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by.

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Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathise with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared; though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his visage! Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor Belcher's administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the election sermon. Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression that the legislative measures of that year were characterised by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway.

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life,

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irreproachable in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: he had one congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the churchyard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper's turn to rest.

Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight, in the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine, who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse, no hired hand-maiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth!

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And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death pillow, with the black veil still swathed about his brow, and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

For some time previous, his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long,

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deep, and irregular inspiration seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside

"Venerable Father Hooper ' said he, "the moment of your release is at hand Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity? "

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful, he exerted himself to speak

"Yea " said he, in faint accents, "my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted ' "

' And is it fitting, resumed the Reverend Mr Clark, 'that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect as you go to your reward Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face! "

And thus speaking the Reverend Mr Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years But, exerting a sudden energy that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bed-



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clothes, and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolute to struggle if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

"Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!"

"Dark old man!" exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved, it rattled in his throat, but, with a mighty effort, grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed, and there he sat, shivering with the arms of death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful, at that last moment, in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper's lips.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend, the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin—then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have

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lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"

While his auditors shrank from one another in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the Black Veil!

## THE SIEGE OF BERLIN

BY

ALPHONSE DAUDET

As we went up the Champs Élysées with Doctor V——, we gleaned the story of Paris—the besieged from the walls shattered by shells and the streets torn up by grapeshot. Just before coming to the Place de l'Étoile, the Doctor paused to point out to me one of the imposing group of mansions opposite the Arc de Triomphe.

"Do you see," he said, "the four closed windows up there on the balcony? At the beginning of August—that awful month of August, 1870, so fraught with wreck and ruin—I was called upon to attend an apoplectic case there. The stricken one was Colonel Jouve, a veteran Cuirassier of the First Empire. Surcharged with patriotic feeling and the glory of it, he had taken a balconied apartment in the Champs Élysées when the war broke out—and for what reason, do you imagine? To witness the triumphal return of our troops! Poor old fellow! Word of Wissembourg came as he got up from the table. At seeing Napoleon's name at the bottom of that bulletin of defeat, he fell insensible. I found the old Cuirassier prostrate upon the floor. His face was bloody, and he was

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senseless—as if struck with a club. On his feet, he would have been unusually tall; lying prone, he seemed gigantic. With fine features, splendid teeth, and curly hair, he carried his eighty years as if they were sixty. His granddaughter knelt over him in tears. She bore close resemblance to him. Side by side, they suggested to me two Greek medallions from the same die, only one was antique, earth-marked, its outlines slightly worn, while the other had all the charm of clear and fresh beauty.

“The grief of this child moved me. A daughter and granddaughter of soldiers—her father was one of MacMahon’s staff—the spectacle of this old man laid out in front of her brought to her mind another vision not less fearful. I tried my best to comfort her, though really I had little or no hope. We had to deal with hemoptysis, which at eighty is almost certainly fatal. Three days the patient remained thus, in a condition of lifelessness and torpor. In the interim, the news of Reichshofen came—recollect how oddly? Until evening, we all believed in a wonderful victory—twenty thousand Prussians wiped out, and the Crown Prince a prisoner.

“I shall never be able to determine by what miracle or magnetic force an intimation of this universal rejoicing could have reached our invalid. Heretofore, he had been deaf to everything about him, but that evening, on coming to his bedside, I beheld a new creature.

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eye was bright, his speech easier, and he had sufficient strength to smile and stammer:

“‘Victory, victory’

“‘Yes, Colonel, a great victory’

“And, as I related the details of MacMahon’s glorious success, I saw his face soften and become illumined.

“When I was about to go his granddaughter, pale and sobbing, appealed to me.

“‘But he is saved,’ I said, pressing both her hands.

“The poor girl had hardly enough courage to reply. The real Reichshofen had just been announced: MacMahon a fugitive, the whole army beaten. Our eyes met in a look of consternation; she was full of concern for her father, while I feared for the grandfather. This new shock would be too much for him; but what were we to do? Leave him to the enjoyment of the delusion that had restored him to consciousness? To do this, we must practice duplicity. Hastily wiping away her tears, the brave girl said, ‘Well then, I will deceive him,’ and returned to her grandfather’s room with a cheerful face.

“What she had resolved to do was no light task. At first, because of his weak head, the old man believed everything told him with childish credulity. But, as he gained strength, his ideas became clearer.

“To keep in touch with the manœuvring of the army, despatches from the front were

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fabricated. Pitiable it was, indeed, to see that charming girl poring day and night over her map of Germany, studding it with little flags, planning an entire, splendid campaign—Bazaine on the way to Berlin, Frossard in Bavaria, MacMahon on the Baltic Sea. In doing this she asked for my advice, and I helped her as much as I could, but in these feigned hostilities the grandfather was of the greatest assistance. During the First Empire, he had conquered Germany so often. He knew all the tactics they should employ. 'Now they will do this. They should go there.' And he was proud to have all his predictions fulfilled. We captured towns, and won battles, but never fast enough for the Colonel, who was insatiable. He greeted me with a new stratagem every day.

"'Mayence is taken, Doctor,' said the young girl, meeting me with a pitiful smile, and through the door I heard the rapturous cry:

"'We are moving, we are moving! We shall take Berlin in a week!'

"At that very moment the Prussians wanted but a week to enter Paris. We considered moving to the provinces, but out there, where he could see the havoc made in the country, he would discover the truth, and I thought him still too weak to bear it. We decided to stay in town. On the first day of the siege, I called upon my patient with misgivings, I recollect, and with that heart-agony felt by all at the thought that the gates of Paris were closed, that

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the war had reached our very walls, and that our suburbs and frontiers were one.

"I found the old man elated. 'Well, the siege has begun,' he said. I looked at him in stupefaction.

"'Why, Colonel, how do you know?'"

"His granddaughter glanced at me, and said, 'Oh, yes, Doctor, it is glorious news—the siege of Berlin has begun.'

"She quietly said this while plying her needle. He was entirely without suspicion. The roaring of the cannon he could not hear, nor could he see Paris, the ill-fated, in dark demoralisation. What he did see from the watch-tower of his bed helped to carry out the delusion. With the Arc de Triomphe outside, there were in the room many reminders of the First Empire. Portraits of marshals, engravings of battles, the son of Napoleon in his baby-clothes; the austere brackets decked with brazen battle-memorials, covered with Imperial relics, medals, bronzes; a stone from St. Helena, under a glass shade; numerous miniatures of a light-eyed, much-be-curled lady in ball dress (a yellow gown with leg-of-mutton sleeves); and all these—the brackets, Napoleon's son, the medals, the yellow ladies in the gaudy straightness of the Empire gown, short-waisted and sashed under the arms—it was this environment of victorious warfare which made the siege of Berlin a fact so real to the poor Colonel!

"Thereafter, our military movements were

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less involved, and the taking of Berlin was merely a question of time. When the old man grew impatient with waiting, we would read him a letter from his son, fictitious of course, as nothing entered Paris, and as, since Sedan, MacMahon's aide-de-camp was in a German fortress.

"Imagine, if you can, the desperation of the poor girl, with no news of her father, certain that he was in prison, necessitous, probably sick, and still pretending to make him speak in hopeful letters, properly brief, of course, as from a soldier on duty marching through a subjugated country. Often, when the invalid suffered from excessive weakness, news would not come for weeks. But suddenly, when he was worried and sleepless, a letter would arrive from Germany, which she read merrily at his bedside, choking back her tears. The Colonel listened attentively, with an air of smiling patronage, assenting, censuring, interpreting. But he outdid himself in his replies to his son. 'Always remember that you are a son of France,' he wrote; 'be kind to those unfortunate people. Make the invasion no harder than they can bear

"His counsel was unceasing: instructive lectures regarding the rights of others; the courtesy due to ladies—in fact, a complete guide to conquerors on the preservation of military honour. Besides this were some thoughts on diplomacy, and stipulations regarding the terms of peace to be made with the defeated. Con-



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cerning the latter, he was most generous: 'The indemnity of the war, but no more. Of what use is it to take provinces? Germany cannot be changed into France!'

"While giving these directions his voice never faltered, and his words evinced so much honesty, of purpose and love of country that we were deeply moved. And all this time the siege was in progress, but not the siege of Berlin, alas!

"The weather was at its coldest, and we were suffering the heaviest bombardment, and the worst horrors of epidemic and famine. But owing to our care, and the unwearied tenderness bestowed upon him, the old man's comfort was never disturbed for a moment. I was even able to obtain white bread and fresh meat for him to the very end, but only for him.

"Could anything have been more touching than those breakfasts of the grandfather, so guilelessly selfish, propped up in bed, bright and smiling, a napkin tucked under his chin, by him his granddaughter was because of deprivation, directing the movements of his hands, compelling him to drink, urging him to eat the good things procured with such difficulty? Strengthened by a meal, and cheered by the warmth of the room, the old Cuirassier was reminded, by the snow which whirled past the window, to speak of his northern campaigns, and would tell us of that disastrous retreat from Russia, with nothing to eat but frozen biscuit and horse-flesh.

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"'Can you imagine that, little one? We ate horse-flesh.'

"Of course she could imagine it, since, for two months, she had eaten nothing else!

"As he grew convalescent, our difficulties increased. The numbness passed from his senses as well as from his limbs, which made it all the harder for us to deceive him. On one or two occasions the cannonading at the Porte Maillot had made him start and listen like a horse on the battle-field; we accounted for it by telling him that Bazaine had just achieved a wonderful victory before Berlin, and what he had heard was the firing of salvos from the Invalides in honour of it.

"On the Thursday of Buzenval, we pushed his bed to the window, from which he saw some of the National Guard massed upon the Avenue de la Grande Armée.

"'What soldiers are those?' he inquired, and we heard him muttering, 'Badly drilled—badly drilled.'

"Nothing else was said, but we made up our minds to show more caution in the future. Only, we did not show enough.

"The child met me, one evening, in great distress. 'To-morrow they enter the city,' she said.

"Was her grandfather's door open then? In reflecting upon that evening afterwards, I have remembered that his face indicated great pensiveness. He may accidentally have heard what

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we said, thinking only of the French and their long-looked-for return with victory perched on their banners: MacMahon coming down the Avenue showered with flowers, and trumpets blowing a flourish; beside the Marshal, his own son; himself, on his balcony in the full uniform of Lützen, saluting the torn colours and powder-blackened eagles!

"Poor Colonel Jouve! Probably he fancied that we wished to keep him from participating at the defile of our troops, fearing the excitement would be too much for him, and so concealing it from him. But on the morrow, just as the Prussian army crept into the long road leading from the Porte Maillot to the Tuileries, the Colonel, arrayed in the battle-stained but glorious uniform of Milhaud's Cuirassiers, with helmet and sword, quietly raised the window, and stepped out upon the balcony.

"It seemed as if every effort of a fast-failing body and iron will had been summoned for this supreme moment, that he might stand to order, ready in harness.

"But what met his gaze as he stood at the railing? Paris, a hospital; all shutters closed; the broad Avenue silent; flags everywhere, but all white, stained with the red cross of suffering, and no one to meet our soldiers. He may have thought it all a mistake for an instant.

"But no. From behind the Arc de Triomphe comes the muffled sound of advancing troops, stepping to the measured beat of the little

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drums of Jena, then the spikes of helmets catch the sunlight, and, when the Place de l'Étoile is reached, the heavy tramp, tramp, of soldiers to the strains of Schubert's Triumphal March force the shocking truth upon him.

"An awful cry broke the sorrowful silence of the streets—a terrible cry:

"'To arms! To arms! The Prussians!'

"The four lancers who were in the vanguard might have looked up and seen a tall, old man wave his arms, stagger, and fall.

"Colonel Jouve had died at his post."

# THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM

BY

EDGAR ALLAN POE

I WAS sick—sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence—the dread sentence of death—was the last of distinct accentuation which reached my ears. After that, the sound of the inquisitorial voices seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of *revolution*—perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill-wheel. This, only for a brief period; for presently I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw; but with how terrible an exaggeration! I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me white—whiter than the sheet upon which I trace these words—and thin even to grotesqueness; thin with the intensity of their expression of firmness—of immovable resolution—of stern contempt of human torture. I saw that the decrees of what to me was Fate were still issuing from those lips. I saw them writhe with a deadly locution. I saw them fashion the syllables of my name; and I shuddered because

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no sound succeeded. I saw, too, for a few moments of delirious horrors, the soft and nearly imperceptible waving of the sable draperies which enwrapped the walls of the apartment. And then my vision fell upon the seven tall candles upon the table. At first they wore the aspect of charity, and seemed white slender angels who would save me; but then, all at once, there came a most deadly nausea over my spirit, and I felt every fibre in my frame thrill as if I had touched the wire of a galvanic battery, while the angel forms became meaningless spectres with heads of flame, and I saw that from them there would be no help. And then there stole into my fancy, like a rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave. The thought came gently and stealthily, and it seemed long before it attained full appreciation; but, just as my spirit came at length properly to feel and entertain it, the figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me; the tall candles sank into nothingness; their flames went out utterly; the blackness of darkness supervened; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rushing descent as of the soul into Hades. Then silence, and stillness, and night were the universe.

I had swooned, but still will not say that all of consciousness was lost. What of it there remained, I will not attempt to define, or even to describe; yet all was not lost. In the deepest slumber—no! In delirium—no! In a swoon—

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no! In death—no! even in the grave all *is not* lost. Else there is no immortality for man. Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of *some* dream. Yet in a second afterward (so frail may that web have been), we remember not that we have dreamed. In the return to life from the swoon, there are two stages; first, that of the sense of mental or spiritual; secondly, that of the sense of physical, existence. It seems probable that if, upon reaching the second stage, we could recall the impressions of the first, we should find these impressions eloquent in memories of the gulf beyond. And that gulf is—what? How at least shall we distinguish its shadows from those of the tomb? But if the impressions of what I have termed the first stage are not, at will, recalled, yet, after long interval, do they not come unbidden, while we marvel whence they came? He who has never swooned is not he who finds strange palaces and wildly familiar faces in coals that glow; is not he who beholds, floating in mid-air, the sad visions that the many may not view; is not he who ponders over the perfume of some novel flower—is not he whose brain grows bewildered with the meaning of some musical cadence which has never before arrested his attention.

Amid frequent and thoughtful endeavours to remember; amid earnest struggles to regather some token of the state of seeming nothingness into which my soul had lapsed, there have been

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moments when I dreamed of success; there have been brief, very brief, periods when I have conjured up remembrances which the lucid reason of a later epoch assures me could have had reference only to that condition of seeming unconsciousness. These shadows of memory tell, indistinctly, of tall figures that lifted and bore me in silence down—down—still down—till a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the interminableness of the descent. They tell, also, of a vague horror at my heart, on account of that heart's unnatural stillness. Then comes a sense of sudden motionlessness throughout all things; as if those who bore me (a ghastly train!) had outrun, in their descent, the limits of the limitless, and paused from the wearisomeness of their toil. After this I call to mind flatness and dampness; and then *all* is *madness*—the madness of a memory which busies itself among forbidden things.

Very suddenly there came back to my soul motion and sound—the tumultuous motion of the heart, and, in my ears, the sound of its beating. Then a pause in which all is blank. Then again sound, and motion, and touch—a tingling sensation pervading my frame. Then the mere consciousness of existence, without thought—a condition which lasted long. Then, very suddenly, *thought*, and shuddering terror, and earnest endeavour to comprehend my true state. Then a strong desire to lapse into insensibility. Then a rushing revival of soul and



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a successful effort to move. And now a full memory of the trial, of the judges, of the sable draperies, of the sentence, of the sickness, of the swoon. Then entire forgetfulness of all that followed; of all that a later day and much earnestness of endeavour have enabled me vaguely to recall.

So far, I had not opened my eyes. I felt that I lay upon my back, unbound. I reached out my hand, and it fell heavily upon something damp and hard. There I suffered it to remain for many minutes, while I strove to imagine where and *what* I could be. I longed, yet dared not to employ my vision. I dreaded the first glance at objects around me. It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but that I grew aghast lest there should be *nothing* to see. At length, with a wild desperation at heart, I quickly unclosed my eyes. My worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The intensity of the darkness seemed to oppress and stifle me. The atmosphere was intolerably close. I still lay quietly, and made effort to exercise my reason. I brought to mind the inquisitorial proceedings, and attempted from that point to deduce my real condition. The sentence had passed; and it appeared to me that a very long interval of time had since elapsed. Yet not for a moment did I suppose myself actually dead. Such a supposition, notwithstanding what we read in fiction, is altogether

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inconsistent with real existence—but where and in what state was I? The condemned to death, I knew, perished usually at the *auto-da-fés*, and one of these had been held on the very night of the day of my trial. Had I been remanded to my dungeon, to await the next sacrifice, which would not take place for many months? This, I at once saw, could not be. Victims had been in immediate demand. Moreover, my dungeon, as well as all the condemned cells at Toledo, had stone floors, and light was not altogether excluded.

A fearful idea now suddenly drove the blood in torrents upon my heart, and, for a brief period, I once more relapsed into insensibility. Upon recovering, I at once started to my feet, trembling convulsively in every fibre. I thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing; yet dreaded to move a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a *tomb*. Perspiration burst from every pore, and stood in cold, big beads upon my forehead. The agony of suspense grew at length intolerable, and I cautiously moved forward, with my arms extended, and my eyes straining from their sockets in the hope of catching some faint ray of light. I proceeded for many paces; but still all was blackness and vacancy. I breathed more freely. It seemed evident that mine was not, at least, the most hideous of fates.

And now, as I still continued to step cautiously onward, there came thronging upon my recollec-

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tion a thousand vague rumours of the horrors of Toledo. Of the dungeons there had been strange things narrated—fables I had always deemed them—but yet strange, and too ghastly to repeat save in a whisper. Was I left to perish of starvation in this subterranean world of darkness, or what fate, perhaps even more fearful, awaited me? That the result would be death, and a death of more than customary bitterness, I knew too well the character of my judges to doubt. The mode and the hour were all that occupied or distracted me.

My outstretched hands at length encountered some solid obstruction. It was a wall, seemingly of stone masonry—very smooth, slimy, and cold. I followed it up; stepping with all the careful distrust with which certain antique narratives had inspired me. This process, however, afforded me no means of ascertaining the dimensions of my dungeon, as I might make its circuit and return to the point whence I set out without being aware of the fact—so perfectly uniform seemed the wall. I therefore sought the knife, which had been in my pocket when led into the inquisitorial chamber, but it was gone; my clothes had been exchanged for a wrapper of coarse serge. I had thought of forcing the blade in some minute crevice of the masonry, so as to identify my point of departure. The difficulty, nevertheless, was but trivial; although in the disorder of my fancy it seemed at first insuperable. I tore a part of the hem

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from the robe, and placed the fragment at full length, and at right angles to the wall. In groping my way around the prison, I could not fail to encounter this rag upon completing the circuit. So, at least, I thought; but I had not counted upon the extent of the dungeon, or upon my own weakness. The ground was moist and slippery. I staggered onward for some time, when I stumbled and fell. My excessive fatigue induced me to remain prostrate; and sleep soon overtook me as I lay.

Upon awaking, and stretching forth an arm, I found beside me a loaf and a pitcher of water. I was too much exhausted to reflect upon this circumstance, but ate and drank with avidity. Shortly afterward I resumed my tour around the prison, and, with much toil, came at last upon the fragment of the serge. Up to the period when I fell I had counted fifty-two paces, and, upon resuming my walk, I had counted forty-eight more—when I arrived at the rag. There were in all, then, a hundred paces; and, admitting two paces to the yard, I presumed the dungeon to be fifty yards in circuit. I had met, however, with many angles in the wall, and thus I could form no guess at the shape of the vault, for vault I could not help supposing it to be.

I had little object—certainly no hope—in these researches; but a vague curiosity prompted me to continue them. Quitting the wall, I resolved to cross the area of the enclosure.

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At first I proceeded with extreme caution, for the floor, although seemingly of solid material, was treacherous with slime. At length, however, I took courage, and did not hesitate to step firmly—endeavouring to cross in as direct a line as possible. I had advanced some ten or twelve paces in this manner, when the remnant of the torn hem of my robe became entangled between my legs. I stepped on it, and fell violently on my face.

In the confusion attending my fall I did not immediately apprehend a somewhat startling circumstance which yet, in a few seconds afterward, and while I still lay prostrate, arrested my attention. It was this: my chin rested upon the floor of the prison, but my lips and the upper portion of my head, although seemingly at a less elevation than the chin, touched nothing. At the same time my forehead seemed bathed in a clammy vapour, and the peculiar smell of decayed fungus arose to my nostrils. I put forward my arm, and shuddered to find that I had fallen at the very brink of a circular pit, whose extent, of course, I had no means of ascertaining at the moment. Groping about the masonry just below the margin, I succeeded in dislodging a small fragment, and let it fall into the abyss. For many seconds I harkened to its reverberations as it dashed against the sides of the chasm in its descent: at length there was a sudden plunge into water, succeeded by loud echoes. At the same moment there came

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a sound resembling the quick opening, and as rapid closing, of a door overhead, while a faint gleam of light flashed suddenly through the gloom, and as suddenly faded away

I saw clearly the doom which had been prepared for me, and congratulated myself upon the timely accident by which I had escaped. Another step before my fall, and the world had seen me no more. And the death just avoided was of that very character which I had regarded as fabulous and frivolous in the tales respecting the Inquisition. To the victims of its tyranny, there was the choice of death with its direst physical agonies, or death with its most hideous moral horrors. I had been reserved for the latter. By long suffering my nerves had been unstrung, until I trembled at the sound of my own voice, and had become in every respect a fitting subject for the species of torture which awaited me.

Shaking in every limb, I groped my way back to the wall—resolving there to perish rather than risk the terror of the wells, of which my imagination now pictured many in various positions about the dungeon. In other conditions of mind I might have had courage to end my misery at once, by a plunge into one of these abysses, but now I was the veriest of cowards. Neither could I forget what I had read of these pits—that the *sudden* extinction of life formed no part of their most horrible plan.

Agitation of the spirit kept me awake for

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many long hours; but at length I again slumbered. Upon arousing I found by my side, as before, a loaf and a pitcher of water. A burning thirst consumed me, and I emptied the vessel at a draught. It must have been drugged—for scarcely had I drunk before I became irresistibly drowsy. A deep sleep fell upon me—a sleep like that of death. How long it lasted of course I know not; but when once again I unclosed my eyes, the objects around me were visible. By a wild, sulphurous lustre, the origin of which I could not at first determine, I was enabled to see the extent and aspect of the prison.

In its size I had been greatly mistaken. The whole circuit of its walls did not exceed twenty-five yards. For some minutes this fact occasioned me a world of vain trouble; vain indeed—for what could be of less importance, under the terrible circumstances which environed me, than the mere dimensions of my dungeon! But my soul took a wild interest in trifles, and I busied myself in endeavouring to account for the error I had committed in my measurement. The truth at length flashed upon me. In my first attempt at exploration I had counted fifty-two paces up to the period when I fell: I must then have been within a pace or two of the fragment of serge; in fact, I had nearly performed the circuit of the vault. I then slept—and, upon awaking, I must have returned upon my steps—thus supposing the circuit nearly

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double what it actually was. My confusion of mind prevented me from observing that I began my tour with the wall to the left, and ended it with the wall to the right.

I had been deceived, too, in respect to the shape of the enclosure. In feeling my way I had found many angles, and thus deduced an idea of great irregularity; so potent is the effect of total darkness upon one arousing from lethargy or sleep! The angles were simply those of a few slight depressions, or niches, at odd intervals. The general shape of the prison was square. What I had taken for masonry seemed now to be iron, or some other metal, in huge plates, whose sutures or joints occasioned the depression. The entire surface of this metallic enclosure was rudely daubed in all the hideous and repulsive devices to which the charnel superstition of the monks had given rise. The figures of fiends in aspects of menace, with skeleton forms, and other more really fearful images, overspread and disfigured the walls. I observed that the outlines of these monstrosities were sufficiently distinct, but that the colours seemed faded and blurred, as if from the effects of a damp atmosphere. I now noticed the floor, too, which was of stone. In the centre yawned the circular pit from whose jaws I had escaped; but it was the only one in the dungeon.

All this I saw indistinctly and by much effort—for my personal condition had been greatly changed during slumber. I now lay upon my



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back, and at full length, on a species of low framework of wood. To this I was securely bound by a long strap resembling a surcingle. It passed in many convolutions about my limbs and body, leaving at liberty only my head, and my left arm to such extent that I could, by dint of much exertion, supply myself with food from an earthen dish which lay by my side on the floor. I saw, to my horror, that the pitcher had been removed. I say to my horror—for I was consumed with intolerable thirst. This thirst it appeared to be the design of my persecutors to stimulate—for the food in the dish was meat pungently seasoned.

Looking upward, I surveyed the ceiling of my prison. It was some thirty or forty feet overhead, and constructed much as the side walls. In one of its panels a very singular figure riveted my whole attention. It was the painted figure of Time as he is commonly represented, save that, in lieu of a scythe, he held what, at a casual glance, I supposed to be the pictured image of a huge pendulum, such as we see on antique clocks. There was something, however, in the appearance of this machine which caused me to regard it more attentively. While I gazed directly upward at it (for its position was immediately over my own), I fancied that I saw it in motion. In an instant afterwards the fancy was confirmed. Its sweep was brief and, of course, slow. I watched it for some minutes, somewhat in fear, but more

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in wonder. Wearied at length with observing its dull movement, I turned my eyes upon the other objects in the cell.

A slight noise attracted my notice, and, looking to the floor, I saw several enormous rats traversing it. They had issued from the well, which lay just within view to my right. Even then, while I gazed, they came up in troops, hurriedly, with ravenous eyes, allured by the scent of the meat. From this it required much effort and attention to scare them away.

It might have been half an hour, perhaps even an hour (for I could take but imperfect note of time), before I again cast my eyes upward. What I then saw confounded and amazed me. The sweep of the pendulum had increased in extent by nearly a yard. As a natural consequence, its velocity was also much greater. But what mainly disturbed me was the idea that it had perceptibly *descended*. I now observed—with what horror it is needless to say—that its nether extremity was formed of a crescent of glittering steel, about a foot in length from horn to horn; the horns upward, and the under edge evidently as keen as that of a razor. Like a razor also it seemed massy and heavy, tapering from the edge into a solid and broad structure above. It was appended to a weighty rod of brass, and the whole *hissed* as it swung through the air.

I could no longer doubt the doom prepared for me by monkish ingenuity in torture. My

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cognisance of the pit had become known to the inquisitorial agents—the *pit*, whose horrors had been destined for so bold a recusant as myself—the *pit*, typical of hell and regarded by rumour as the Ultima Thule of all their punishments. The plunge into this pit I had avoided by the merest of accidents, and I knew that surprise, or entrapment into torment, formed an important portion of all the grotesquerie of these dungeon deaths. Having failed to fall, it was no part of the demon-plan to hurl me into the abyss; and thus (there being no alternative) a different and a milder destruction awaited me. Milder! I half smiled in my agony as I thought of such application of such a term.

What boots it to tell of the long, long hours of horror more than mortal, during which I counted the rushing oscillations of the steel! Inch by inch—line by line—with a descent only appreciable at intervals that seemed ages—down and still down it came! Days passed—it might have been that many days passed—ere it swept so closely over me as to fan me with its acrid breath. The odour of the sharp steel forced itself into my nostrils. I prayed—I wearied heaven with my prayer for its more speedy descent. I grew frantically mad, and struggled to force myself upward against the sweep of the fearful scimitar. And then I fell suddenly calm, and lay smiling at the glittering death, as a child at some rare bauble.

There was another interval of utter insensi-

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bility; it was brief; for, upon again lapsing into life, there had been no perceptible descent in the pendulum. But it might have been long—for I knew there were demons who took note of my swoon, and who could have arrested the vibration at pleasure. Upon my recovery, too, I felt very—oh, inexpressibly!—sick and weak, as if through long inanition. Even amid the agonies of that period, the human nature craved food. With painful effort I outstretched my left arm as far as my bonds permitted, and took possession of the small remnant which had been spared me by the rats. As I put a portion of it within my lips, there rushed to my mind a half-formed thought of joy—of hope. Yet what business had I with hope? It was, as I say, a half-formed thought—man has many such, which are never completed. I felt that it was of joy—of hope; but I felt also that it had perished in its formation. In vain I struggled to perfect—to regain it. Long suffering had nearly annihilated all my ordinary powers of mind. I was an imbecile—an idiot.

The vibration of the pendulum was at right angles to my length. I saw that the crescent was designed to cross the region of the heart. It would fray the serge of my robe—it would return and repeat its operations—again—and again. Notwithstanding its terrifically wide sweep (some thirty feet or more), and the hissing vigour of its descent, sufficient to sunder these very walls of iron, still the fraying of my

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robe would be all that, for several minutes, it would accomplish. And at this thought I paused. I dared not go farther than this reflection. I dwelt upon it with a pertinacity of attention—as if, in so dwelling, I could arrest *here* the descent of the steel. I forced myself to ponder upon the sound of the crescent as it should pass across the garment—upon the peculiar thrilling sensation which the friction of cloth produces on the nerves. I pondered upon all this frivolity until my teeth were on edge.

Down—steadily down—it crept. I took a frenzied pleasure in contrasting its downward with its lateral velocity. To the right—to the left—far and wide—with the shriek of a damned spirit! to my heart, with the stealthy pace of the tiger! I alternately laughed and howled, as the one or the other idea grew predominant.

Down—certainly, relentlessly down! It vibrated within three inches of my bosom! I struggled violently—furiously—to free my left arm. This was free only from the elbow to the hand. I could reach the latter from the platter beside me to my mouth, with great effort, but no farther. Could I have broken the fastenings above the elbow, I would have seized and attempted to arrest the pendulum. I might as well have attempted to arrest an avalanche!

Down—still unceasingly—still inevitably down. I gasped and struggled at each vibration. I shrank convulsively at its every sweep. My

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eyes followed its outward or upward whirls with the eagerness of the most unmeaning despair; they closed themselves spasmodically at the descent, although death would have been a relief, oh, how unspeakable! Still I quivered in every nerve to think how slight a sinking of the machinery would precipitate that keen, glistening axe upon my bosom. It was *hope* that prompted the nerve to quiver—the frame to shrink. It was *hope*—the hope that triumphs on the rack—that whispers to the death-condemned even in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

I saw that some ten or twelve vibrations would bring the steel in actual contact with my robe—and, with this observation, there suddenly came over my spirit all the keen, collected calmness of despair. For the first time during many hours—or perhaps days—I *thought*. It now occurred to me that the bandage, or surcingle, which enveloped me, was *unique*. I was tied by no separate cord. The first *stroke* of the razor-like crescent athwart any portion of the band would so detach it that it might be unwound from my person by means of my left hand. But how fearful, in that case, the proximity of the steel! The result of the slightest struggle, how deadly! Was it likely, moreover, that the minions of the torturer had not foreseen and provided for this possibility? Was it probable that the bandage crossed my bosom in the track of the pendulum? Dreading

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to find my faint, and, as it seemed, my last, hope frustrated, I so far elevated my head as to obtain a distinct view of my breast. The surcingle enveloped my limbs and body close in all directions—*save in the path of the destroying crescent.*

Scarcely had I dropped my head back into its original position, when there flashed upon my mind what I cannot better describe than as the unformed half of that idea of deliverance to which I have previously alluded, and of which a moiety only floated indeterminately through my brain when I raised food to my burning lips. The whole thought was now present—feeble, scarcely sane, scarcely definite—but still entire. I proceeded at once, with the nervous energy of despair, to attempt its execution.

For many hours the immediate vicinity of the low framework upon which I lay had been literally swarming with rats. They were wild, bold, ravenous—their red eyes glaring upon me as if they waited but for motionlessness on my part to make me their prey. “To what food,” I thought, “have they been accustomed in the well?”

They had devoured, in spite of all my efforts to prevent them, all but a small remnant of the contents of the dish. I had fallen into an habitual see-saw, or wave of the hand about the platter; and at length the unconscious uniformity of the movement deprived it of effect. In their voracity the vermin frequently fastened

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their sharp fangs in my fingers. With the particles of the oily and spicy viand which now remained I thoroughly rubbed the bandage wherever I could reach it; then, raising my hand from the floor, I lay breathlessly still.

At first the ravenous animals were startled and terrified at the change—at the cessation of movement. They shrank alarmedly back, many sought the well. But this was only for a moment. I had not counted in vain upon their voracity. Observing that I remained without motion, one or two of the boldest leaped upon the framework and smelt at the surcingle. This seemed the signal for a general rush. Forth from the well they hurried in fresh troops. They clung to the wood—they overran it, and leaped in hundreds upon my person. The measured movement of the pendulum disturbed them not at all. Avoiding its strokes, they busied themselves with the anointed bandage. They pressed—they swarmed upon me in ever accumulating heaps. They writhed upon my throat, their cold lips sought my own, I was half stifled by their thronging pressure; disgust for which the world has no name swelled my bosom, and chilled, with a heavy clamminess, my heart. Yet one minute, and I felt that the struggle would be over. Plainly I perceived the loosening of the bandage. I knew that, in more than one place, it must be already severed. With a more than human resolution I lay *still*.

Nor had I erred in my calculations—nor had



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I endured in vain. I at length felt that I *was free*. The surcingle hung in ribbons from my body. But the stroke of the pendulum already pressed upon my bosom. It had divided the serge of the robe. It had cut through the linen beneath. Twice again it swung, and a sharp sense of pain shot through every nerve. But the moment of escape had arrived. At a wave of my hand my deliverers hurried tumultuously away. With a steady movement—cautious, sidelong, shrinking, and slow—I slid from the embrace of the bandage and beyond the reach of the scimitar. For the moment, at least, *I was free*.

Free!—and in the grasp of the Inquisition! I had scarcely stepped from my wooden bed of horror upon the stone floor of the prison when the motion of the hellish machine ceased, and I beheld it drawn up, by some invisible force, through the ceiling. My every motion was undoubtedly watched. Free!—I had but escaped death in one form of agony, to be delivered unto worse than death in some other. With that thought I rolled my eyes nervously around on the barriers of iron that hemmed me in. Something unusual—some change which, at first, I could not appreciate distinctly—it was obvious had taken place in the apartment. For many minutes of a dreamy and trembling abstraction I busied myself in vain, unconnected conjecture. During this period I became aware, for the first time, of the origin of the

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sulphurous light which illumined the cell. It proceeded from a fissure, about half an inch in width, extending entirely around the prison at the base of the walls, which thus appeared, and were, completely separated from the floor. I endeavoured, but of course in vain, to look through the aperture.

As I arose from the attempt the mystery of the alteration in the chamber broke at once upon my understanding. I have observed that, although the outlines of the figures upon the walls were sufficiently distinct, yet the colours seemed blurred and indefinite. These colours had assumed, and were momentarily assuming, a startling and most intense brilliancy, that gave to the spectral and fiendish portraitures an aspect that might have thrilled even firmer nerves than my own. Demon eyes, of a wild and ghastly vivacity, glared upon me in a thousand directions, where none had been visible before, and gleamed with the lurid lustre of a fire that I could not force my imagination to regard as unreal.

*Unreal!*—Even while I breathed there came to my nostrils the breath of the vapour of heated iron! A suffocating odour pervaded the prison! A deeper glow settled each moment in the eyes that glared at my agonies! A richer tint of crimson diffused itself over the pictured horrors of blood. I panted! I gasped for breath! There could be no doubt of the design of my tormentors—oh! most unrelenting! oh! most demoniac of

## The Pit and the Pendulum

men! I shrank from the glowing metal to the centre of the cell. Amid the thought of the fiery destruction that impended, the idea of the coolness of the well came over my soul like balm. I rushed to its deadly brink. I threw my straining vision below. The glare from the enkindled roof illumined its inmost recesses. Yet for a wild moment did my spirit refuse to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced—it wrestled its way into my soul—it burned itself in upon my shuddering reason. Oh! for a voice to speak!—oh! horror!—oh! any horror but this! With a shriek I rushed from the margin, and buried my face in my hands—weeping bitterly.

The heat rapidly increased, and once again I looked up, shuddering as with a fit of the ague. There had been a second change in the cell—and now the change was obviously in the *form*. As before, it was in vain that I at first endeavoured to appreciate or understand what was taking place. But not long was I left in doubt. The Inquisitorial vengeance had been hurried by my two-fold escape, and there was to be no more dallying with the King of Terrors. The room had been square. I saw that two of its iron angles were now acute—two, consequently, obtuse. The fearful difference quickly increased with a low rumbling or moaning sound. In an instant the apartment had shifted its form into that of a lozenge. But the alteration stopped not here—I neither hoped nor desired

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it would stop. I could have clasped the red walls to my bosom as a garment of eternal peace. "Death," I said, "any death but that of the pit!" Fool! might I not have known that *into the pit* it was the object of the burning iron to urge me? Could I resist its glows? or if even that, could I withstand its pressure? And now, flatter and flatter grew the lozenge, with a rapidity that left me no time for contemplation. Its centre, and of course its greatest width, came just over the yawning gulf. I shrank back—but the closing walls pressed me resistlessly onward. At length for my seared and writhing body there was no longer an inch of foothold on the firm floor of the prison. I struggled no more, but the agony of my soul found vent in one loud, long, and final scream of despair. I felt that I tottered upon the brink—I averted my eyes——

There was a discordant hum of human voices! There was a loud blast as of many trumpets! There was a harsh grating as of a thousand thunders! The fiery walls rushed back! An outstretched arm caught my own as I fell, fainting, into the abyss. It was that of General Lasalle. The French army had entered Toledo. The Inquisition was in the hands of its enemies!

## REALITY

BY

CHARLES READE

MISS SOPHIA JACKSON, in the State of Illinois, was a beautiful girl, and had a devoted lover, Ephraim Slade, a merchant's clerk. Their attachment was sullenly permitted by Miss Jackson's parents, but not encouraged: they thought she might look higher.

Sophia said, "Why, la! he is handsome and good, and loves me, and is not that enough?"

They said, "No; to marry Beauty, a man ought to be rich."

"Well," said Sophy, "he is on the way to it: he is in a merchant's office."

"It is a long road; for he is only a clerk."

The above is a fair specimen of the dialogue, and conveys as faint an idea of it as specimens generally do.

All this did not prevent Ephraim and Sophia from spending many happy hours together.

But presently another figure came on the scene—Mr. Jonathan Clarke. He took a fancy to Miss Jackson, and told her parents so, and that she was the wife for him, if she was disengaged. They said, "Well, now, there was a

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young clerk after her, but the man was too poor to marry her."

Now, Mr. Jonathan Clarke was a wealthy speculator; so, on that information, he felt superior, and courted her briskly.

She complained to Ephraim. "The idea of their encouraging that fat fool to think of me!" said she. She called him old, though he was but thirty, and turned his person and sentiments into ridicule, though, in the opinion of sensible people, he was a comely man, full of good sense and sagacity.

Mr. Clarke paid her compliments. Miss Jackson laughed, and reported them to Slade in a way to make him laugh too.

Mr. Clarke asked her to marry him. She said no; she was too young to think of that. She told Ephraim she had flatly refused him.

Mr. Clarke made her presents. She refused the first, and blushed, but was prevailed on to accept. She accepted the second and the third, without first refusing them.

She did not trouble Ephraim Slade with any portion of this detail. She was afraid it might give him pain.

Clarke wooed her so warmly that Ephraim got jealous and unhappy. He remonstrated. Sophia cried, and said it was all her parents' fault—forcing the man upon her.

Clarke was there every day. Ephraim scolded. Sophia was cross. They parted in anger.

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Sophia went home, and snubbed Clarke. Clarke laughed, and said, "Take your time."

He stuck there four hours. She came round, and was very civil.

Matters progressed. Ephraim always unhappy. Clark always jolly. Parents in the same mind.

Clarke urged her to name the day.

"Never!"

Urged her again.

"Next year."

Urged her again before her parents. They put in their word. "Sophy, don't trifle any longer. You are overdoing it."

"There, there, do what you like with me," said the girl; "I am miserable!" and ran out crying.

Clarke and parents laughed, and stayed behind, and settled the day.

When Sophy found they had settled the day, she sent for Ephraim and told him, with many tears: "Oh!" said she, "you little know what I have suffered this six months!"

"My poor girl," said Ephraim, "let us elope and end it."

"What! My parents would curse me."

"Oh, they would forgive us in time!"

"Never. You don't know them. No, my poor Ephraim, we are unfortunate. We can never be happy together. We must bow. I should die if this went on much longer."

"You are a fickle, faithless jade!" cried Ephraim, in agony.

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"God forgive you, dear!" said she, and wept silently.

Then he tried to comfort her. Then she put her arm round his neck, and assured him she yielded to constraint, but her heart could never forget him; she was more unhappy than he, and always should be.

They parted, with many tears on both sides, and she married Clarke. At her earnest request, Slade kept away from the ceremony. By that means she was not compelled to wear the air of a victim, but could fling the cloak of illusory happiness and gayety over her aching heart; and she did it, too. She was as gay a bride as had been seen for some years in those parts.

Ephraim Slade was very unhappy. However, after a bit, he comprehended the character of Sophia Clarke, *née* Jackson, and even imitated her. She had gone in for money, and so did he: only on the square—a detail she had omitted. Years went on: he became a partner in the house, instead of a clerk. The girls set their caps at him. But he did not marry. Mrs. Clarke observed this, and secretly approved. Say she had married, that was no reason why he should. *Justice des femmes!*

Now you will observe that, by all the laws of fiction, Mrs. Clarke ought to have learned, to her cost, that money does not bring happiness, and ought to have been miserable, especially whenever she encountered the pale face of him whose love she valued too late.



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as they were, not as they had been; and it was no fault of hers, nor California's, if her husband was a changed man.

In short, they pressed her hard to sue for a divorce and let Slade know she was going to do it.

But the woman was still handsome and under thirty, and was not without a certain pride and delicacy that grace her sex even when they lack the more solid virtues. "No," said she, "I will never go begging to any man. I'll not let Ephraim Slade think I divorced my husband just to get him. I'll part with Jonathan, since he has parted with me, and after that I will take my chance. Ephraim Slade? He is not the only man in the world with eyes in his head "

So she sued for a divorce, and got it quite easily. Divorce is beautifully easy in the West.

When she was free, she had no longer any scruple about Ephraim. He lived at a town seven miles from her. She had a friend in that town. She paid her a visit. She let the other lady into her plans, and secured her co-operation. Mrs. X—— set it abroad that Mrs. Clarke was a widow; and, from one to another, Ephraim Slade was given to understand that a visit from him would be agreeable.

"Will it?" said Ephraim. "Then I'll go."

He called on her, and was received with a sweet, pensive tenderness. "Sit down, Ephraim—Mr. Slade," said she, softly and tremulously, and left the room. She had scarcely cleared it

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when he heard her tell the female servant, with a sharp, imperious tone, to admit no other visitors. It did not seem the same voice. She came back to him melodious. "The sight of you after so many years upset me," said she. Then, after a pause and a sigh, "You look well."

"Oh, yes, I am all right! We are neither of us quite so young as we were, you know."

"No, indeed" (with another sigh). "Well, dear friend, I suppose you have heard. I am punished, you see, for my want of courage and fidelity. I have always been punished. But you could not know that. Perhaps, after all, you have been the happier of the two. I am sure I hope you have."

"Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Clarke," said he, in open, manly tones.

She stopped him. "Please don't call me Mrs. Clarke, when I have parted with the name forever; (*sotto voce*) call me Sophia."

"Well, then, Sophia, I'll tell you the truth. When you jilted me——"

"Oh!"

"And married Cl——who shall I say? Well, then, married *another*, because he had got more money than I had——"

"No, no. Ephraim, it was all my parents. But I will try and bear your reproaches. Go on."

"Well, then, of course I was awfully cut up. I was wild. I got a six-shooter to kill you and—the other."

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"I wish you had," said she. She didn't wish anything of the kind.

"I'm very glad I didn't, then. I dropped the six-shooter and took to the moping and crying line."

"Poor Ephraim!"

"Oh, yes! I went through all the changes, and ended as other men do."

"And how is that?"

"Why, by getting over it."

"What! you have got over it?"

"Lord, yes! long ago."

"Oh! in—deed!" said she, bitterly. Then, with sly incredulity, "How is it you have never married?"

"Well, I'll tell you. When I found that money was everything with you girls, I calculated to go in for money too. So I speculated, like—the other, and made money. But, when I had once begun to taste money-making, somehow I left off troubling about women. And, besides, I know a great many people, and I look coolly on, and what I see in every house has set me against marriage. Most of my married friends envy me, and say so. I don't envy any one of them, and don't pretend to. Marriage! It is a bad institution! You have got clear of it, I hear. All the better for you. I mean to take a shorter road: I won't ever get into it."

This churl, then, who had drowned hot passion in the waves of time, and, instead of nursing a passion for her all his days, had

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been hugging celibacy as man's choicest treasure, asked her coolly if there was anything he could do for her. Could he be of service in finding out investments, etc., or could he place either of the boys in the road to wealth? Instead of hating these poor children, like a man, he seemed all the more inclined to serve them that their absent parent had secured him the sweets of celibacy.

She was bursting with ire, but had the self-restraint to thank him, though very coldly, and to postpone all discussion of that kind to a future time. Then he shook hands with her, and left her.

She was wounded to the core. It would have been very hard to wound her heart as deeply as this interview wounded her pride.

She sat down, and shed tears of mortification.

She was aroused from that condition by a letter in a well-known hand. She opened it, all in a flutter:

*"My Dear Sophy:* You are a nice wife, you are. Here I have been slaving my life out for you, and shipwrecked, and nearly dead with a fever, and coming home rich again, and I asked you just to come from Chicago to New York to meet me, that have come all the way from China and San Francisco, and it is too much trouble. Did you ever hear of Lunham's dog that was so lazy he leaned against the wall to bark? It is very disheartening to a poor fellow that has played a man's part for you and the children. Now, be a good girl, and

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meet me at Chicago to-morrow at 6 p. m. For, if you don't, by thunder! I'll take the children and absquatulate with them to Paris, or somewhere. I find the drafts on New York I sent from China have never been presented. Reckon by that, you never got them. Has that raised your dander? Well, it is not my fault. So put on your bonnet, and come and meet

"Your affectionate husband,

"JONATHAN CLARKE.

"I sent my first letter to your father's house. I send this to your friend, Mrs. X——."

Mrs. Clarke read this in such a tumult of emotions that her mind could not settle a moment on one thing. But when she had read it, the blood in her beating veins began to run cold.

What on earth should she do? Fall to the ground between two stools? No—that was a man's trick, and she was a woman, every inch.

She had not any time to lose; so she came to a rapid conclusion. Her acts will explain better than comments. She dressed, packed up one box, drove to the branch station, and got to Chicago. She bought an exquisite bonnet, took private apartments at a hotel, and employed an intelligent person to wait for her husband at the station, and call out his name, and give him a card, on which was written:

.....  
MRS. JONATHAN CLARKE

At the X—— Hotel  
.....

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This done, she gave her mind entirely to the decoration of her person.

The ancients, when they had done anything wrong, and wanted to be forgiven, used to approach their judges with dishevelled hair and shabby clothes—*sordidis vestibus*.

This poor shallow woman, unenlightened by the wisdom of the ancients, thought the nicer a woman looked, the likelier a man would be to forgive her, no matter what. So she put on her best silk dress, and her new French hat bought on purpose, and made her hair very neat, and gave her face a wash and a rub, that added colour. She did not rouge, because she calculated she should have to cry before the end of the play, and crying hard over rouge makes channels.

When she was as nice as could be, she sat down to wait for her *divorcé*. She might be compared to a fair spider which has spread her web to catch a wasp, but is sorely afraid that, when he does come, he will dash it all to ribbons.

The time came, and passed. An expected character is always as slow to come as a watched pot to boil.

At last there was a murmur on the stairs; then a loud, hearty voice, then a blow at the door—you could not call it a tap—and in burst Jonathan Clarke, brown as a berry, beard a foot long, genial and loud, open-hearted, Californian manners.

At sight of her, he gave a hearty "Ah!" and

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came at her with a rush to clasp her to his manly bosom, and knocked over a little gilt cane chair.

The lady, quaking internally and trembling from head to foot, received him like the awful Siddons, with one hand nobly extended, forbidding his profane advance. "A word first, if you please, sir."

Then Clarke stood transfixed, with one foot advanced and his arm in the air, like Ixion when Juno turned cloud.

"You have ordered me to come here, sir, and you have no longer any right to order me: but I am come, you see, to tell you my mind. What, do you really think a wife is to be deserted and abandoned, most likely for some other woman, and then be whistled back into her place like a dog? No man shall use *me* so."

"Why, what is the row? Has a mad dog bitten you, ye cantankerous critter?"

"Not a letter for ten months, that is the matter!" cried Mrs. Clarke, loud and aggressive.

"That is not my fault. I wrote three from China, and sent you two drafts on New York."

"It is easy to say so: I don't believe it."  
(Louder and aggressiver)

CLARKE (bawling in his turn). "I don't care whether you believe it or not. Nobody but you calls Jony Clarke a liar."

MRS. CLARKE (competing in violence). "I believe one thing—that you were seen all about San Francisco with a lady. 'Twas to her you directed my letters and drafts: that is how I lost

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them. It is always the husband that is in fault, and not the post." (Very amicably all of a sudden): "How long were you in California after you came back from China?"

"Two months."

"How often did you write in that time?" (Sharply.)

"Well, you see, I was always expecting to start for home."

"You never wrote once!" (Very loud.)

"That was the reason."

"That and the lady!" (Screaming loud.)

"Stuff! Give me a kiss, and no more nonsense."

(Solemnly): "That I shall never do again. Husbands must be taught not to trifle with their wives' affections in this cruel way." (Tenderly): "Oh, Jonathan, how could you abandon me? What could you expect? I am not old; I am not ugly."

"Damn it all, if you have been playing any games"—and he felt instinctively for a bowie-knife.

"Sir!" said the lady, in an awful tone, that subjugated the monster directly.

"Well, then," said he, sullenly, "don't talk nonsense. Please remember we are man and wife."

MRS. CLARKE (very gravely). "Jonathan, we are not."

"If you are going into a passion, I won't tell you anything; I hate to be frightened. What language the man has picked up—in California!"



## Reality

"Well, that's neither here nor there. 'You go on.'"

"Well, Jonathan, you know I have always been under the influence of my parents. It was at their wish I married you "

"That is not what you told me at the time."

"Oh, yes, I did, only you have forgotten. Well, when no word came from you for so many months, my parents were indignant, and they worked upon me so and pestered me so—that—Jonathan, we are divorced "

The actress thought this was a good point to cry at, and cried accordingly.

Jonathan started at the announcement, swore a heartful, and then walked the room in rage and bitterness. "So, then," said he, "you leave the woman you love, and the children whose smiles are your heaven, you lead the life of a dog for them, and, when you come back, by God! the wife of your bosom has divorced you, just because a letter or two miscarried! That outweighs all you have done and suffered for her Oh, you are crying, are you? What, you have given up facing it out, and laying the blame on me, have you?"

"Yes, dear, I find you were not to blame: it was—my parents."

"Your parents! Why, you are not a child, are you? You are the parent of my children, you little idiot! Have you forgotten that?"

"No. Oh! oh! oh! I have acted hastily, and very, very wrong."

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"Come, that is a good deal for a pretty woman to own. There, dry your eyes, and let us order dinner."

"What! dine with *you*?"

"Why, damn it, it is not the first time by a few thousand."

"La, Jonathan! I *should* like; but I *mustn't*."

"Why not?"

"I should be compromised."

"What, with me?"

"Yes—with any gentleman. Do try and realise the situation, dear. *I am a single woman.*"

• Good Mr. Clarke—from California—delivered a string of curses so rapidly that they all ran into what Sir Walter calls a "clishmaclaver," even as when the ringers clash and jangle the church bells.

Mrs. Clarke gave him time, but as soon as he was in a state to listen quietly, compelled him to realise *her* situation. "You see," said she, "I am obliged to be very particular now. Delicacy demands it. You remember poor Ephraim Slade?"

"Your old sweetheart. Confound him! has he been after you again?"

"Why, Jonathan, ask yourself. He has remained unmarried ever since, and, when he heard I was free, of course he entertained hopes. But I kept him at a distance, and so" (tenderly and regretfully) "I must you. *I am a single woman.*"

"Look me in the face, Sophy. You won't dine with me?"

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"I'd give the world, but I *mustn't*, dear."

"Not if I twist your neck round—darling—if you don't?"

"No, dear. You shall kill me, if you please. But I am a respectable woman, and I will not brave the world. But I know I have acted rashly, foolishly, ungratefully, and deserve to be killed. Kill me, dear—you'll forgive me then!" With that, she knelt down at his feet, crossed her hands over his knees, and looked up sweetly in his face with brimming eyes, waiting, yea, even requesting, to be killed.

He looked at her with glistening eyes. "You cunning hussy," said he, "you know I would not hurt a hair of your head. What is to be done? I tell you what it is, Sophy: I have lived three years without a wife, and that is enough. I won't live any longer so—no, not a day. It shall be you, or somebody else. Ah! what is that?—a bell. I'll ring, and order one. I've got lots of money. They are always to be had for that, you know."

"Oh, Jonathan! don't talk so. It is scandalous. How can you get a wife all in a minute by ringing?"

"If I can't, then the town-crier can. I'll hire him."

"For shame!"

"How is it to be, then? You that are so smart at dividing couples, you don't seem to be very clever in bringing 'em together again."

"It was my parents, Jonathan, not me. Well,

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dear, I always think when people are in a difficulty, the best thing is to go to some very *good* person for advice. Now, the best people are the clergymen. There is one in this street, number eighteen. Perhaps he could advise us."

Jonathan listened gravely for a little while, before he saw what she was at, but the moment he caught the idea so slyly conveyed he slapped his thigh and shouted out, "You are a sensible girl—come on!" And he almost dragged her to the clergyman. Not but what he found time to order a good dinner in the hall as they went.

The clergyman was out, but soon found. He remarried them, and they dined together man and wife.

They never mentioned grievances that night, and Jonathan said, afterward, his second bridal was worth a dozen of his first. For, the first time, she was a child, and had to be courted up-hill, but the second time she was a woman, and knew what to say to a fellow.

Next day Mr. and Mrs. Clarke went over to ——. They drove about in an open carriage for some hours, and did a heap of shopping. They passed by Ephraim Slade's place of business much oftener than there was any need, and slower. It was Mrs. Clarke who drove. Jonathan sat, and took it easy.

She drives to this day.

And Jonathan takes it easy.





